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"now, when the ocean lay as still as the land, he would just catch up an oar, and give Leonore a waft of the breeze that lay lagging on shore, but would blow ten times as fresh when they had rowed out to a few fathoms of sea."

W A Scott

THE

MINISTRY OF LIFE.

BY

MARIA LOUISA CHARLESWORTH.

Limpsfield Church.

NEW YORK:
D. APPLETON & Co. BROADWAY.

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THE MINISTRY OF LIFE.

BY

MARIA LOUISA CHARLESWORTH,

AUTHOR OF "MINISTERING CHILDREN," ETC. ETC.

"For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."—MARK x. 45.

NEW YORK:
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,
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PREFACE.

The following pages have been written in the hope that some of those who, a few years ago, gave their young and touching welcome to the tale that pictured childhood's ministry, will retain the same child-like spirit, making them willing to be led by every aid in still advancing paths of pleasantness and peace. Around their youth the responsibilities of older life may now be opening, and the measure of their usefulness and blessedness must depend upon the way they meet the deepening calls which added years cannot fail to bring.

In gathering from the experience of life for those who are as yet only crossing its threshold, it would be impossible in a small volume to delineate all the bearings of Society's large circle. There is much to regret in the present aspect of many amongst the sons and brothers of our land, who indulge in a reckless selfishness, as if it were a birthright privilege; or who study

apathy as if it were repose, and appear incapable of being quickened into self-forgetting interests and animated energy. Such characters are too generally familiar to need the portrait-painter to make them known; we can but ask to unfold before them "a more excellent way." And equally amongst the daughters and sisters of our land must we mourn the indifference, independence, unsheltered forwardness, which are effacing the dignity and feminine grace that have been one peculiar glory of our nation. We could not attempt to perpetuate the memory of that which we trust will prove more transient than the lives of those who have adopted feelings and habits opposed to "Whatsoever things are lovely, and of good report," "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," (as we rejoicingly know that there are,) rather would be obey the apostolic injunction, and "think on these things."

It is not without regret that a book entitled "The Ministry of Life" is allowed to appear, in no way adapted to the peasant's hand. It is not that the cottage has been forgotten, in its hallowed nook in the social circle; but, while childhood's ministry of love could be universally blended, in older life subjects arise which to the peasant would be useless and incomprehensible. Yet it may be that some blessed influence will flow to the poor, through hearts whom

God may incline to a sympathy with the principles these pages delineate.

This work has not been written to illustrate the personal effort involved in moral progress on earth, but to illustrate the actual ministry of life; therefore the former is only alluded to, while the latter is dwelt upon in detail. If our aim in life be rightly directed, and followed in a right spirit, sustaining strength for every effort, and patience under every discouragement, will certainly be given from on high.

LIMPSFIELD RECTORY,
August, 1858.

THE MINISTRY OF LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

'BROTHER! my child—my orphan Antonia!' These words expressed the last earthly anxiety of a British officer, as, supported by his elder brother's arm, the tide of earthly life ebbed fast and faint away. Tidings of the 'casualties' of that day's strife reached the country town from afar, and the child's trembling hope of her father's return was exchanged for the certainty of earth's enduring separation. The loneliness of the orphan came down upon her heart. Kind friends and faithful servants gathered round her, but there was no longer one kindred spirit upon earth to whom she was life's first care—its first object of affection. Oh, within many an infant bosom beats an heroic soul, whose hidden conflict of feeling, uncomplaining patience, and conquest of self, would, could it be revealed, unfold far nobler achievements than the impetuous daring, which, sometimes, is the only pretension to the trophies of victory! Before General North allowed himself to see his home, after land-

ing once more on his native shore, he clasped the orphan Antonia to his heart, and made immediate arrangements for her accompanying him to reside henceforth in his family. The presence of her uncle led Antonia to repress the overflowing distress which filled her breast at the thought of being severed from all the associations of her childhood and home. Her efforts of self-command were not lost on the observant heart that had hastened to adopt her as its own. General North was not one of those surface-observers by whom the silence of expression is assumed to indicate the absence of all deep emotion; and the parental tenderness with which he transplanted this child of twelve years from her home, was the earthly balm of her full cup of sorrows. They travelled on from the wide, level heaths and gentle slopes of her native scenery, to where the land wore larger features, where the low uplands rose to hills, and the valleys swept between them; where the little streams blended in one bright rushing river, and the scattered copsewoods were exchanged for forests of the noble beech.

General North inherited the entailed family estates, and it was one of the palace-homes of England to which he bore the orphan child. Her aunt received her with the welcome of a true sympathy, sparing her the response to much expression or inquiry; and for a time she was left free to follow her own will, and solace and acquaint herself as best she might with all things around her. Her two youngest cousins, Clara and Leonore, were always in the schoolroom, or in some way engaged with their governess, except in the

evening. Anastasia, her eldest cousin, was two or three-and-twenty years of age, and followed exclusively her own line of pursuit. Happily for Antonia, General North's only son was then at home; he followed his father's profession of arms, and within a few weeks was to return to the service, from which his father had decided on retiring.

This soldier cousin, Lieutenant North, gave Antonia a brother's companionship; his thoughtful kindness was blended with that instinct of respect, which in some minds is a universal feeling for every human being of man's immortal race, and blended also with reverence for the sorrow even of a child: he became to Antonia in a brief space of time the perfection of an elder brother.

Three weeks passed by, and Lieutenant North rejoined his regiment, but his work departed not with his presence; he had cared to shelter the first days of the stranger child —to bend his older companionship to her younger years— to win her confidence before her spirit sealed up in silent feeling all its orphaned sympathies; and to beguile her with Nature's charms, which have a secret power to soften grief in every heart that yields itself to their influence. Her adopted brother was gone, but Antonia was strengthened. She trod her new home with a step more assured, and looked on others with less timid glances: the soldier had turned to fulfil a simple work of unselfish charity, performed itself, in a short space of time, but its effect lasted on in unmeasured duration; it was the child's first launch upon life's changeful sea, and the tenderness of a father, the devotion

and confidence of a brother, had met and welcomed her affection and her trust, before one needless burden had been imposed, or one needless check had been given. Antonia still spent most of the summer day in the beech-woods surrounding the mansion; there at eventide she often lingered, unwilling to leave the last sunbeam which had wandered in amongst the giant stems, shedding there its golden lustre; and when that last sunbeam faded, the child still lingered on, because the music of the woods swelled louder as the shadows fell. She listened as the birds answered each other in their songs, and in her fancy framed them into thoughts of Heaven. The evening star looked down upon her through the opening leaves, and she looked up to it; then starting with a sigh, she lifted her large hat from the ground, and hastened home. She left the squirrel on the bough, the hares and rabbits feeding on the bank, the birds to their evening song, and the kindling stars of night; and, half-frightened lest she should meet the chiding—that yet never came, she hastened home, often wondering that she alone was left to love an hour so beautiful! And when the dazzling lamp that shed its light within the entrance-hall, and the glare of all the candles in the curtained drawing-room, first broke upon her heaven-filled eyes, she wondered more, and felt her silent spirit lonely. But when kind looks and pleasant voices greeted her, she was happy in the present moment, and the scene she had left only gave its softening depth to her young feelings.

The time came at length when Mrs. North expressed

her wish that Antonia should join her cousins in the schoolroom, and the hope that she would improve to the utmost the advantages there afforded her, and not allow anything to divert her attention from the studies necessary to a thorough education.

Antonia tried to respond to her aunt's wish, but it was with more of apprehension than confidence. She had been sent during the last few years to a day-school in the country-town where her father's residence had been fixed; there she had her daily lessons of the arts and sciences in catechisms, which, containing the outlines, unillumed with any of the poetry of genius or nature, were soon forgotten in their unattractive dulness; but the child's observant, reflective mind had from infancy been drawing in its own pure aliment at every pore, and had attained a natural healthful expansiveness and apprehension, that no mere routine of study could have imparted; rather would it more probably have seriously impeded the development of heart and mind, that was ready now to breathe its freshness in the home of its adoption, as it had before in its native nest. It was an anxious moment—this young mind of delicate sensitiveness, guarded and gently unfolded beneath the light of all pure and lovely things, in its infancy by a mother's tenderness, in its childhood by a father's care, learning its harmless amount of lessons at a day-school, now suddenly to be thrown into the hard study of a thorough schoolroom education! Who could but fear that the heavy shower, meant to nurture, would surcharge the tender flower—that either it would bend and

break, or never look up again with such native ease to the blue heavens above its head?

Antonia accompanied her cousins to the schoolroom. She had seen Miss Keymer, their governess, every evening, in the drawing-room, and had always made one of the schoolroom party at tea; but now on entering, she instantly observed Miss Keymer's altered expression of countenance; there was an anxious, overpressed look upon her face, that she never remembered to have seen before: was it habitual to the schoolroom? or was it a foreboding of the task that awaited her in Antonia's education?

'I must find out what progress you have already made in your studies, my dear, and then I shall know how best to arrange for you in future. I suppose you have made some proficiency in music?'

'No, I can scarcely play at all. I had lessons of a music-mistress in the town, but she said I had not courage for execution.'

'Have you given it up then?'

'Yes; I only play a few little airs by myself because I don't like to forget them.'

'It is a great pity you should have given it up, because you have lost too much time ever to regain it. Do you draw?'

'No; I had some lessons, but the master said I had no perseverance, and I was glad to leave off.'

'No perseverance! that is a bad fault indeed! Did you not like drawing?'

'O no; I used to look at all the little fine straight strokes until my head ached, and then I made them crooked.'

'Could he not have given you some broad strokes to copy?'

'I do not know; he always drew my copies himself, and I don't think his pencils could make broad strokes, the points were so fine!'

'You are fond of languages, I hope?'

'I don't know any!'

'Not any, my dear? you don't say so! how could your education be so neglected?'

'Indeed it was not neglected! I was put in a class to learn French at school, but they were all in the middle of the syntax; I never could make it out, so my exercises were always wrong, the master said grammar was everything.'

'Of course it is essential in the study of a language. I hope, at least, you understand the English grammar!'

'I have learnt Murray quite through, but I forget it now.'

'My dear, impossible! Tell me, then, what you have learnt,—what you do know?' Antonia looked down in silence. Miss Keymer tried geography, but Antonia could still only confess ignorance: dates in history—but Antonia stood hopeless. Miss Keymer was in despair. Antonia's tasks were given from the first rudiments of all things, and the duty of now devoting every possible moment to study was urged upon her by her anxious instructress.

Mrs. North possessed a mind of high intelligence and

cultivation, but she had too much overlooked the fact, that, to cram smaller brains, or brains acutely sensitive, with all that more comprehensive or stronger ones have held freely, must of necessity clog and oppress them—effectually preventing the exercise and expansion of their native power. Not one of Mrs. North's children possessed their mother's mental abilities, yet their governess was expected to bring them up to the same standard of attainment; with much labour and anxiety on Miss Keymer's part, and great diligence on that of her pupils, the whole amount was likely to be wedged in. Their mother looked forward to the time when they would be her intelligent, interesting, and interested companions, not having calculated on the possibility that the weight of acquirement might weaken the free spring of thought; that the power of observation—which is the eye of the mind—might be obscured by the labour of acquisition, as overwork darkens the visual ray; and the spirit's freedom and repose be destroyed in the ceaseless habit of mental exertion. Mrs. North already felt the first touch of disappointment in her eldest daughter, but this was attributed to character, and the children were still kept under a high-pressure engine of cultivation; therefore Miss Keymer's dismay may be better understood than expressed, when Antonia was introduced to the schoolroom.

The days passed on with the stranger child, and she supposed her burden unknown and unnoticed. The light was gone from her eyes, and the smile from her lips, as, through the drawing-room evening, the whole array of

materials for education floated in a confused mass before her tired eyes; she saw not her uncle's kind and often impatient look of inquiry directed towards her, nor the expression of anxious interest in her aunt's intelligent countenance; nor did she know that her aunt had prevailed on General North to allow a month to pass over before any inquiry was made of Antonia, in the hope that by that time she would be reconciled to application, and Miss Keymer be able to report hopefully of future progress. The end of the month came at length, and its last day proved by far the worst; for, when Antonia was expected to repeat the substance of all she had learned, her confused memory could furnish nothing that proved any compensation to Miss Keymer for her trouble, nor to herself for her efforts. There was no mistaking the expression of her face on that evening. Her uncle was at no loss to read it, and equally resolved to remedy it. He called her aside to his study, which opened with folding-doors from the drawing-room; while the evening music continued, he could talk with her there undisturbed.

'Well, little girl, is the field lost or won? does Miss Keymer write you down for a paragon or a dunce? Tell it out, and tell me all!'

'O uncle! I never tried so hard; but I seem to have no memory, nor understanding, nor taste, and I am quite in despair!'

'Despair! who ever heard such a word from the lips of thirteen? and a soldier's child too! Did Miss Keymer teach you despair?'

'No, uncle; Miss Keymer is very patient and kind, and says she does not give up hope to make something of me yet; but, indeed, I shall soon be quite miserable, for I give nothing but trouble, and no use in the end, because everything jumbles together, and I don't know one thing from another.'

'What goes to make up this everything?'

Antonia counted her lessons over. 'Well to be sure,' replied her uncle, 'the number is something staggering to courage; and a young recruit, too! but take comfort, little girl, no bounty money has been paid for you yet; I don't reckon you enlisted in the schoolroom, and if you like better to stand by your old uncle's colours, and take your chances with him, you shall do so; and I will try my hand at what may be done with you yet. Don't be frightened! I am not going to hold up a primer and have you stand before me to spell the cross-row. I have no school for cadets, but if you like to take a bold venture at my side, and breast the world's battle-field, as if you had been trained for it, why so you shall, and we will share this study between us.'

'O uncle, how glad I should be! I thought I was never to feel free any more!'

'Very well, then, it is settled; I will let you know the hours I expect you to be here with me, and all the remainder of your time I give you free as your own.'

When Antonia, Clara, and Leonore, had retired from the drawing-room, General North communicated the arrangement he had made. Mrs. North heard the General's

promise in astonishment, remarking, 'Antonia is your niece, but, were she mine, with her education so entirely neglected, I should certainly be more inclined to procure her a second governess, than to deprive her of the instructions of one so painstaking!'

'Well, well; we are but putting on our harness,' replied the General kindly, 'let the issue proclaim our fate!'

Miss Keymer's sense of relief was only equalled by her pity for the child; but Miss North expressed her belief that Antonia would grow up to expose her ignorance in general society.

'And what if she should?' replied the General, 'some one will probably be able to set her right; most willingly would I see a few mistakes of the head substituted for the far deeper errors of the heart—which are to be met with every day throughout society, I fear. A little readiness in acknowledging ignorance would be no discredit with those whose good opinion is most worth possessing.'

When Antonia, on leaving the drawing-room, communicated her future expectations, her cousin, Clara, spared no expressions of compassion. 'Learn with papa! why papa has not an atom of patience! I never yet could read through one whole page to papa! O poor Antonia, you are in for it now!' Little Leonore looked up, but said nothing.

The next morning Antonia went to the study by appointment. It had from the first been her favourite room, it opened with glass doors on the lawn, like their own little draw-

ing-room in the house of her parents ; the lawn of her native home was a very small one, but bright flowers bloomed round it, and the wild birds came daily for Antonia to feed them, it was beautiful, and sacred with blessed memories to her, and she had often stood at her uncle's study window when no one was there, looking on the lawn and the birds, lost in dreams of her home, until his step, or some other, suddenly aroused her. On her entering now, by her uncle's appointment, she found a little table and desk placed ready, and a small high-backed oaken chair placed for her at this, her favourite window ; and when she took her seat, soft shadows were over the lawn, and the wild birds were chasing the flies, and hopping at will.

'Now come to your uncle,' said General North, cheeringly, 'and tell him your *whims*, since, if I understood right, you say you have neither memory, nor understanding, nor taste.'

'I only meant for those clever and difficult things that Clara does so well; I can understand some things,' said Antonia, looking up, as if pleading her own cause.

'Well, well, I am the judge now; I wonder what from those shelves of history you would care to read?'

'All! all!' exclaimed Antonia, as her delighted eyes gazed on the rows of volumes—folios, quartos, and octavos.

'You care for history, then?'

'O yes, uncle; if the day were thirty-six hours long, I could read history for twelve hours, I think! but I had only Rollin, and some made up of pieces and dialogues.'

'Are you fond of travels?'

'O yes; I don't mind where, or how long, but I had only Mungo Park and Columbus.'

'Do you care for poetry?'

'O yes; I know Cowper almost by heart, and Milton I love dearly; and once I found Spenser's "Fairy Queen" in some delightful old pamphlets; and once, for a month, I had Dryden.'

General North appeared satisfied; his inquiries went no further, and therefore he drew forth no further information. Reaching down the first volume of Clarendon, he bade the child take her seat and read on to him; stretching himself in his arm-chair as listener. Antonia was too happy in the book before her to remember Clara's foreboding as to failure; she read on until the lawn, and the birds, and her uncle, were forgotten in the heroes of days long gone by.

'Well, little girl,' at length said her uncle, 'it is a good spell for once, as the days are not yet thirty-six hours long; do you think you will keep the least glimpse of it all until to-morrow?'

'Yes, uncle; I shall not forget; if you try me, you will find I have not!'

When the family party assembled to luncheon, General North was not present until the conclusion of the repast, so that full opportunity was afforded for questioning Antonia; but when she first entered the room, the calm sunlight of her eyes told of thoughtful hours of brightness and blessing.

'O, you have not been with papa, then?' exclaimed Clara, convinced of the impossibility of surviving it with so bright a brow.

'Yes, indeed, I have!'

'Did you read to him?'

'Yes; I don't know for how long.'

Clara was silent in surprise; but Anastasia hastened to remark: 'You would not have got on so well, if it had not been that papa feels so much for you!'

These words cast a shade for a moment on the child's expressive face; it passed again, but not without lessening the brightness of that face to one lower degree. How is it that this is so often done heedlessly or purposely on earth? It is an impulse of expression, probably, seldom, if ever, met with from minds of unselfish nature; it is always directed to lower the elevation at which it is aimed—to tarnish a little the brightness in which another is thought to be too much rejoicing—to lessen the value of that which is making them feel enriched—to prove that some alloy is in the cup of which their lips are tasting the sweetness. A secret jealousy, that knows not how to let another be happy, if itself be passed by; or an impatient impulse to express an opinion, which a better knowledge would have corrected; or yet, more often, perhaps, a positive inability of understanding the feelings of a mind whose tone is higher than its own. It must be often met on earth, because young spirits are seldom trained, and older spirits too often will not train themselves, to an unselfish participation in the feelings of others.

When Antonia took her seat in the study the next morning, and opened the first volume of Clarendon, to read again to her uncle, the shadow returned. The possible fear of the previous day had then been lost in the positive pleasure; but now, the thought that her undisturbed enjoyment had been a consequence of the endurance of compassion, gave a weight instead of a lightness to the whole prospect before her.

Her uncle instantly noticed the change, and with a disappointed feeling, said hastily, 'What hangs in the balance to-day?—tired of your new schoolroom already?'

'O no, uncle; yesterday was all happiness!'

'Then what is it? Answer straight to the mark, or you will find no quarter from me.'

'I am afraid that if I do not read well it will tire you!'

'So it will, to be sure, there's no doubt of that. I always have said, and I say it still, that a bad reader proves a fault that lies somewhere deeper than in the head. Ah, ah! I see how it is; they have been crying out "fire," and so scared you; but now no more bobbing from fear at a whizz, or I will not call you the child of a soldier again. Bear on with high courage without a thought of what's coming, and if you get a knock down, and have the power left to rise, spring up again and bear on, twice as bravely as before!' And then he added in a softened tone, 'No more fear, little girl; never bugle rang sweeter on your old uncle's ear than your young voice did yesterday; if you

don't break down in courage, you will have your own way with him yet.'

Then the child raised one look to her uncle that beamed confidence from its bright depths, and was soon lost in the records of the old Cavalier.

CHAPTER II.

The care of one observant heart had rescued the child from the pressure that would have weighed down her bright expanding energies; and by straining, would have destroyed the beauty of her intellectual being. The continued pressure would have brought her gushing sympathies into a fellowship with the mental strain, the heart must have shared the over-burden of the mind, instead of being left free to flow forth and meet the feelings of others. Many a child, as life unfolds, might display an unselfish loveliness of character, had not its early powers been in some way over-burdened. Not, on the one hand, to exhaust the energies, and so, by consequence, the sympathies also, by an over-straining; and, on the other hand, not to leave those unexhausted energies and sympathies running to waste, but to direct them to relative and social, as well as personal claims, must be one great secret of successful education. In General North to observe, to understand, and to act, had become, from the long unselfish habit of his life, almost instincts of nature. From observing, and understanding, none could hinder him; and only one being in the world was ever permitted, with his own consent, to arrest the corresponding

course of action,—his wife's decision was allowed to supersede his own.

General North had entered on a public career while still very young, and when in after-life he urged his views on education, Mrs. North always pleaded that, having himself been trained under very different circumstances, he must allow her to judge of the amount of mental discipline necessary to education in the sheltered indulgence of a luxurious home.

To this General North objected that he was no enemy to discipline; he only differed as to what discipline was—'Require obedience instant and unquestioning, put out your candle by curfew if you will, but give the mind, in its pursuits, a latitude and choice worthy of its immortal and individual nature. Do not constrain its varied powers, tastes, and feelings, to the same measured routine; if you do, the living freshness of nature will be lost in the settled uniformity so imposed.'

To this Mrs. North replied, that the ground-work of knowledge must be first acquired.

'But,' objected the General, 'what is knowledge from its first to its latest acquirement? It does not consist alone in what the schoolroom best aids; but is to be no less received by observation more at large, and conscious or unconscious contemplation. Let the children grow and expand like the flowers, assimilating all they receive with their being, and making the world around them the better for their presence, instead of all this imprisonment of educa-

tion, until they are built up like a tower, brick upon brick, of no use to any one until it is *finished*, and then looking down on all below it!'

But Mrs. North thought the venture too great of allowing General North to direct the education of their girls; and she had no idea herself of any other plan than the one already pursued.

It was in vain that General North finally urged that they should at least be left a little more to their own resources—not helplessly directed in every thing—in order that each child might not become a monotone, instead of yielding the indefinable variety inseparable from expanding life. In vain that he still maintained that the finest points of character could never be taught by routine, but must be drawn forth by the social charities of life—learned by observation, and caught from reflection. The fact that he was wanting in the experience of the schoolroom, made Mrs. North look upon her own judgment as impregnable. Her decision, though trying to him in the extreme, being fatal to his enjoyment in his children, was yet always yielded to, because he had never crossed her wishes nor denied her will.

When Antonia was added to the home, Mrs. North said all that she thought due to her interest in the child, and then yielded the point; as she felt that the case was one in which General North's judgment, however mistaken, ought to be allowed to decide.

To General North it was a perpetual solace, day after

day, to devote some portion of his time to the orphan child of the brother, whom he would at any moment have risked his own life to save. But had it been otherwise, he would not have turned from the task; for those who can observe and understand the under-current of feeling, are those also who are willing to *act.* The habit of observing, and the power of understanding the characters of others, are both the *result* as well as the *incentive* of *self-sacrifice in action;* and like Him whose will they manifest, their reward is with them!

Antonia's readings with her uncle soon became more varied; and General North found a pleasant reader no little acquisition to his daily enjoyment. By degrees one school-book after another found a place on Antonia's writing-table; and her uncle was often appealed to in any difficulty she encountered. The child's mind, relieved from all pressure, and pursuing steadily the acquirement of knowledge in the way in which it could best blend it with its own being, found its power increase, and applied it to fresh sources of information.

General North one day asked Antonia whether she would like to read a little German with him, if he promised to be her grammar, and only required her to use a dictionary? Antonia welcomed the proposal; it was not the dreaded French with which she had vainly struggled in the depths of the syntax; it was fresh and untried, and to be able to begin in the middle, and without exercises, was the perfection of learning to a mind whose powers were all in-

tellectual, not mechanical. Learning, as it met her now, won the love of her heart, and fixed on its pursuit the thoughts and wishes of her mind. It soon became evident that whatever Antonia's burdens might be, her acquirement of knowledge was not likely to prove one. Formed as she was, with a trembling sensitiveness of nature, which vibrated at every breath that passed along its chords, it was certain that earth could offer no untroubled life for her; but the veteran from the battle-field had spread his shield above the orphan's head, and beneath its shelter she was gaining strength and power, to tread her outward way with dignity, and joy, and gentleness.

When Antonia exchanged the heavy work of the schoolroom for her uncle's study, she expressed to Miss Keymer her regret for the trouble she had given, and her sense of Miss Keymer's kindness, with all the warmth of her simple ingenuous nature. Miss Keymer's heart was replenished with good feeling, instead of pride, therefore her kind response soon set the orphan at rest, and Antonia's free spirit added brightness at the schoolroom evening repasts.

When the winter days came, Antonia still found full employment for her time. Her aunt often invited her to her morning room, to sit by her sofa and read to her. On these occasions Mrs. North took down from her shelves—and listened while Antonia read to her—the works of deep research which had first interested her own mind, when her youth was some years in advance of what Antonia's was then. Mrs. North felt free to enjoy the child's companion-

ship, as she could not feel herself in any way the cause of Antonia's imperfect education.

In advancing life, a halo of interest gathers around all that first charmed the heart in youth; Mrs. North would, probably, never have herself read through again the books of deepest interest in her earlier life; but to lie on her sofa, amused with her work, and listen, while the almost forgotten trains of thought, argument, or fact, fell in the melody of words from the lips of the child, whose young mind opened to receive them, became to Mrs. North the luxury of the day. With the long past of studious thought, came back fresh breathings of all the early and bright associations that in youth had blended with them, until at times the present faded in a haze of memories and feelings of the long-ago; and when Antonia stopped, unable to follow the clue of reasoning, and looked up to her aunt to make its meaning clear, Mrs. North would, with a slight start, recall the present, and bid Antonia read her difficulty again. Never displeased at interruption, she added her own lucid comments, listened to Antonia's questionings, and never thought the point made clear until the child was satisfied. In this way Antonia's expanding mind, at fourteen years of age, was enriched by the thoughts that had flowed from much of the noblest genius of her native land. The correctness of rules, and the mechanical apparatus of knowledge, she did not in all points acquire; but the comprehensiveness of her mind was enlarged, and its power strengthened by the great thoughts it

received, in a degree in which it could not most probably have otherwise been.

The fact of learning from great minds, humble in their lofty elevation, and to Antonia's apprehension inconceivably above herself, together with her own imperfect knowledge of what those around her esteemed essential, aided—so far as earthly means could aid—in keeping her still adorned with the simplicity of true humility. Mrs. North found in Antonia a companionship of mind, only the more attractive because of its untutored freshness, and young dependence on her clear and powerful intellect.

One day Mrs. North said to the General, 'I really had no conception of the pleasure of imparting knowledge, until Antonia came daily to read with me; but I could never undertake to lay the ground-work of education myself.'

'Alas,' replied General North, 'for that terrible house-building system! When nature lays all the roots first, I would do the same; but until then I would look also after the branches, flowers, and fruit, and trust a little more for what you call the "ground-work!"'

The winter passed away, and the beech-trees unfolded their first tender leaves to the songs of the countless birds that filled the woodland depths with melody and joy; the ground around those ancient trees was bright with all the young frail blossoming of spring, while high above the sheltering veil of gleaming foliage the blue sky arched in softness inexpressible. It was seldom now that the General or Mrs. North walked beyond the gardens; they drove through

the beech-woods, but the lonely glades were rarely seen by them. The exquisite beauty of one of these rejoicing days tempted them beyond the terrace walk, and having once entered the woods they wandered on. The pathway at length climbed a height; and as they walked above they looked down upon the green mist of the young foliage, on which the slanting sunbeams fell, shedding a radiance there, so blended with the softening green that the eye could rest upon it with delight. In the glade's low depth flowed on the sparkling, laughing river, dashing its crests of foam round each small peak of stone in its uneven bed, leaping on in mimic waterfalls, until, heard far away, its murmur died in whispered melody. The scene and sounds were so enchanting, that the General and Mrs. North paused to look and listen; and as they gazed below, beneath the trees, a little way above the gleaming river, they saw Antonia seated, where wild anemones bloomed around her in their snowy elegance, and nature in its rich luxuriance encircled her on every side.

'There is Antonia!' said the General, 'we will not disturb her; no doubt she thinks she has found a nest as lonely as the wild birds.'

'It would delight her,' responded Mrs. North, 'to see us here.'

'Yes, it would delight her now, to turn and see us,' replied the General, 'but she would never feel so free again in her solitude; she would listen for a voice in every breeze, a step in every sound. I know well what it is to wander away

from all, in forests wild enough; *my* dreams were all of you, I cannot guess Antonia's.'

Not far from Antonia's glade they reached the head gamekeeper's cottage, and stopped to make a call there as they passed; only the wife was at home with her infant and youngest girl, the husband was in the woods, the elder children at school. The visit gave the good wife the greatest pleasure. She had kept an accurate account of the time that had passed since the General and Mrs. North last entered her cottage. 'Why, since Madam was here, my Charley and the babe have been born; and since our master was in here there's been the land-slip in the West Woods, and poor Sam Ling had his arm shot through by the poachers!

'Pray, ma'am, as you came by, didn't you see the dear young lady our master brought home from the wars? You must have passed up above her, for she went by not the half of an hour agone, all in her black mourning still, to her lonesome covert down yonder, where she sits by the two hours together, reading her book. Pray did Madam know that when the dear young lady found out last winter, by chance as it were, that neither I nor my husband could read, and the young ones getting ahead of us in that, she took up with learning us both? Dear me, the hours, one time with another, she sat under our thatch in the winter, till we both got a hold of it! My husband, he's a wonderful notion of it already; and I can pick it out a little, but not to say read well; but she says if we keep on now, as well as we can,

another winter will make us both pretty near perfect! Didn't Madam know that?

'Well, it came on this way; my husband used to come back—it was soon after our master brought her home from the wars—and my husband used to come home, and say he'd seen that young thing sitting there on the ground, like to a young dove fallen out from the nest; and he was always saying she should never sit there on the ground, when the autumn damp came at the fall o' the leaf, if he had an arm to twist a withe; so one day, 'gainst the fall o' the year, he was up by the glimmer o' the day, and made her a seat: 'tis rough enough, to be sure, but 'tis dry; and 'tis long enough for her to lie upon and keep her young feet from the ground. And my husband has got an old sack he throws over it at night times, to keep it all fresh. We are as fond of her as if she were one of our own!—to and fro with us so long—we should not know the place, like, without her, any more!'

One afternoon, when Antonia had been reading to her aunt, Mrs. North suddenly said, 'Never mind about finishing the chapter, I daresay you want to be off to your nest in the woods?'

'O no, aunt! I only go there when I am alone; I like to stay with you while I may.'

'What makes you so fond of sitting under the beech-trees?' asked her aunt, in a tone that invited confidence.

Antonia looked down, as she replied, 'I always have liked, as long as I can remember, to be alone with only Nature, under the blue sky.'

'But why?' repeated her aunt, in the same kind tone.

Antonia was silent a moment, and then said, 'I don't know very well how to explain it, but I like to lose myself in things so beautiful!'

'Do you then spend all your time thinking of the things you see around you?'

'No, not all the time.'

'What else, then?' asked Mrs. North, with the feeling —for the first time with a child—as if she were venturing on sacred ground.

'I learn my Bible there!'

Mrs. North was at a moment's loss to understand the simple answer, and said, 'How do you mean you learn it there, my dear?'

'I learn the Psalms, the Prophets, the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Proverbs, and the Revelations,' replied Antonia, looking up with kindling eyes, as she reckoned over the divine books of inspiration which she had learned from a child.

Mrs. North was taken by surprise at such an array from the lips of a child who had shown herself so little disposed to learn by task-work; but she only remarked, 'Then you commit the Bible to memory all the time you are in the woods?'

'No, sometimes I only read one verse, sometimes I only think of one I have learned before, and sometimes I say to myself a whole chapter or Psalm. Oh, they are so beautiful where only God and Nature are!'

Mrs. North looked grave, but Antonia, beaming with her subject, did not observe the look.

'What made you first think of learning the Bible in the woods?' asked her aunt.

'I did not learn it there first, I learned to love it first with mamma, and then with papa, and now I always learn it *alone!*' and the large tears of past deep joys and sorrows filled the child's bright eyes.

Mrs. North drew her to her, kissed her tenderly, and told her she might go. Antonia went, and Mrs. North was left alone.

The glowing earnestness and simple truth of the child's feeling and expression, had penetrated her aunt's reflective mind. Mrs. North had sometimes heard the pleadings and appeals of the eminently great and good, and she had heeded not the message that they brought, the warning that they gave; but the child—all glowing in the light and love her heart had gathered from the skies, was a witness she could not, did not scorn. The child, Mrs. North felt, was learning all alone, therefore she might hope to follow in a path as solitary. Once, for a moment, as she thought upon Antonia's last words, 'Now I always learn *alone!*' she thought that she would win her to her side to read with her, but then she thought again, it could not be,—the child's remembrance was of saintly parents, pointing her infant eyes to Heaven, and teaching her to love the truth they read; what could a stranger do in place of them,—a stranger to the knowledge and the love of all the child possessed? No,

she, as a stranger to it yet, must learn it first *alone!* and day after day Mrs. North opened her Bible at the Psalms, the Prophets, or the Gospels, in remembrance of Antonia's lonely communings with truth. But Mrs. North's was a world-worn mind, whose freshness had faded, because it had not been rooted in the divine Redeemer from death; it was difficult for her to receive the kingdom of God as a little child, or like Antonia to lose herself in a look up to Heaven. Long, long did the water of life in the divine Word flow over her soul, before its soil seemed prepared for one blossom of heavenly birth—for faith, or hope, or love new-born from above; unknown by any was the long search for that joy eternal, whose first beam she had seen glowing in the face of the infantine Antonia. Prosperity, and flattery, and self-estimation, all opposed mountains in the way. But at length, after years had passed by, it gleamed on her from afar, like the one goodly pearl of the merchant, and then she could freely consent to sell all and buy it; then flattery and self were cast away, and all things became new in their interest, their claim, and their blessing, as she walked in the light of the Lord.

CHAPTER III.

Miss North had quitted the schoolroom some years before Antonia was received into her uncle's house, and had long felt herself one of the seniors of the family. Having considerable energy of character, and, from her childhood, great rectitude of principle, she had perseveringly directed her powers into the one channel opened before her—the daily schoolroom requirements; every lesson was learned, every task accomplished, but at the end it was commendation that Anastasia North won, rather than love. She had now quitted the schoolroom, but not the habit of a settled routine; she arranged every personal pursuit with like regularity, and was always disturbed if the order of her plans happened to be broken in upon. She was always occupied, but it never appeared that her own mind gathered any increased fertility, it was not perceptibly becoming richer or more enlarged, her conversation gathered no deeper tone; no one turned to her in her house with any increasing confidence for the counsel, or encouragement, or sympathy they might need, and yet the fault was not altogether her own. Her unfolding life had not been blended with the lives of others; she had not been

trained as the young cheerer of her home, and therefore she knew not how to become its older solace and delight. Educated as if her one duty were to apply her mind to her own information, who could expect that she should afterwards be found capable of passing into the self-forgetting home companion? Mrs. North had overlooked the fact that the means must bear a relative correspondence to the desired end; her daughter had never deviated from the line in which the hand of authority had placed and kept her—who could expect a different result?

The first spring after Anastasia had left the schoolroom, General North took a house in London, and the whole family went up to spend the season in town. The distance was great, and the experiment did not prove satisfactory to either the General or Mrs. North; therefore it was not again repeated. The General missed the freedom and interests of his country residence, and Mrs. North felt disappointed in her daughter. Anastasia had quickly formed a friendship with some London relatives who were actively engaged in religious and benevolent works; she entered into their pursuits with the activity of her character; and she listened with interest to the religious truth brought before her, until her heart felt its powerful claim. But here, alas! the schoolroom training, aided by natural disposition, did its hindering part again! Anastasia's energetic mind, habituated to active exercise alone—to the exclusion of all that was purely contemplative, did but barely enter the precincts of each infinite truth; she did not, like Antonia, lose herself in them,

but, recognizing and acknowledging them, she passed by to the works of mercy, rather than on to the divine heart of charity. She heard of district visitors, of Sunday-schools assembled and taught, she made constant inquiries, noted down plans and regulations, copied cards, and took down titles of books, until she returned home with her parents, at the end of the season, prepared to arouse the whole village; which, with no receptacle for learning except a dame's school encouraged by her father, now seemed to Anastasia all sleeping in folded ignorance. How far more hopeful her mission might have been had her early training been different! Anastasia had no conception of what it was to go forth into the length and breadth, the depth and height, of limitless truth and love; and by so doing, evermore to enlarge her own mind, and deepen her own heart, until her whole life reflected Heaven in every part. Instead of this, she drew in enough of divine truth's vital air to breathe by, but devoted her every energy to the machinery of Christian work. On returning home, Anastasia obtained a grant from her father of an unemployed laundry, the use of which had been given up on account of its distance from the house; she also wrote in all directions for a mistress. Something of a *census* of the parish was taken by her, and certain days, and so many cottages a day, apportioned for regular visiting. At the time of Antonia's arrival at her uncle's residence, the whole parochial machinery was in full work; and Anastasia as entirely occupied as in the days of her strictest school discipline.

Mrs. North had made it a self-denying rule never to interrupt her children's schoolroom pursuits; and she now felt at a loss when invading the no less occupied life of her eldest daughter, the more so because Anastasia had attained the full tide of life's energies, while her mother's were gently, yet perceptibly, ebbing, as the tide of her advancing years flowed towards another shore. Mrs. North would often visit her daughter's little studio, to see what opening there might be; but she so generally found Anastasia out, or just going out, or preparing something that must be done before going out, that her mother did not find things inviting either to linger herself, or to propose a stroll or a drive in company. If Mrs. North had asked her daughter to accompany her, she would have obtained an instant assent; but the heart of a mother wants more than *assent;* it wants a spirit in waiting, rejoicing to attend at its side, and like the violet of the spring, to breathe all its fragrance beneath the sheltering tree at whose feet God has planted its home. But to secure this, children must not be trained in the selfish delusion, that to store their own minds with acquirement, is the first and chief object of their young life upon earth.

Miss Keymer observed the deficiency in her pupil; she would sometimes remark to Anastasia in the evening, 'Mrs. North has not been out this fine day.'

'O, has she not? she would if she had felt inclined; papa is always delighted to go with her.'

And so the hint fell to the ground. Alas! good Miss Keymer, it was the mind, not the heart of your pupil you

were bound down to cultivate, and scarce enough time did the day afford for that,—English in its various departments; French, German, and Italian; the sciences, and botany in particular; arithmetic, with some advance into Euclid; drawing, sketching, and water-colouring, which, together with the time occupied in dancing, and two hours daily at the pianoforte, and another hour at the harp, was about as much as the week could accommodate. Anastasia had not indeed perfected herself in all these branches of education; but she had gone as far towards their attainment as duty and diligence could carry her; and having done so, she now unreluctantly took leave of them all, and divided her time into sections for practical purposes.

Clara was now Miss Keymer's eldest pupil, and her proficiency in every line of schoolroom application already outstripped her elder sister's. Clara mastered every difficulty, and worked out every subject, by dint of unrelenting painstaking. Her mind opened to receive all, but having done so, it instantly collapsed—either as the only means of retaining its stores of acquirement, or as the natural re-action of extreme temporary distention; the consequence of this, of course, was, that all the free play of thought and imagination was hopelessly buried; the mind had been constantly receiving so much from without, that no possible space was left for its own intellectual nature to expand and develope itself from within. It is not possible now to say what Clara might have been under different training; but judging from her capabilities and naturally unselfish nature, it may be

supposed she might have been a bright girl, with light step, and free springing thoughts of her own, well informed and companionable to all; whereas now she was literally a mere mass of acquirement. If her father came in weary, and wanted a little refreshment in converse, Clara might be there; but she had a book in her hand, and looked too much engrossed, for his weariness to attempt interrupting her. Or her mother was leaning over her ottoman of wools, vainly trying to match the colour she wanted; Clara might be there—but too intently occupied with her pursuit to see that her mother looked tired with the search. Clever in meeting any point of research, kind-hearted in responding to any personal want, but all general companionableness of nature hopelessly lost. Often did her mother keenly, though silently, feel the difference between Clara's heart and Antonia's, when, as Clara gradually emerged from the schoolroom, Mrs. North would invite her out for a walk or a drive, and Clara would answer, 'Yes, mamma, if you like me to go!' but Antonia, if the question fell on her, would spring up with a beaming 'O yes, I should like it so much!' 'We cannot change character,' Mrs. North would think silently, but she failed to consider that *character*, not *acquirement*, is the first object of all rightly directed education. Place Antonia where you would, if her spirit were not burdened or oppressed, she would in a greater or less degree find pleasure and gather interest—every pore was open, every faculty awake. Clara, from her childhood fettered to acquirement in certain fixed lines, had no universally receptive

power; much that was ever freshly returning enjoyment to Antonia, was a blank to her—but the fault was not her own.

'Why do you not walk oftener with your cousins, Antonia?' General North asked one day. 'Their regular walks would be good for you.'

'I should like to walk with them, uncle, but they always learn botany then.'

'And why do not you learn it with them? A hedgerow, instead of a primer, I should have thought would be perfection for you.'

'Yes, so it would, uncle, only not botany.'

'And why not botany, I wonder?'

'O, I like to know every flower in its life and its beauty; I like to know when it comes and when it goes, and to see where it likes best to grow; but not to pull it to pieces to tell how its form is put together.'

'Then you care nothing for the wonderful arrangement of Nature, for orders and classes?'

'Yes, uncle, I care for the fact; but when I look at the wild flowers, it is their beauty, their fragrance I love; they often make me happy when but for them I must have been sorrowful. O! I am so glad they don't all grow in those wonderful classes side by side in the woods.'

'What harm if they did?'

'No harm, uncle; only I like to know that they don't.'

'But why?'

'Only because then, I think, God who made them, and

knows where each one is springing, though He made them in beautiful order, did not put them all in classes together, and so one can never get tired in thinking about them, because they are scattered in such wild and endless variety.'

'Well, well, little girl, I don't know about botany myself; I am very much of the opinion that, in too many instances, the heart loses as much as the mind gains, when it exchanges delighted contemplation for curious inquiry. But Anastasia told me the other day that you never went out with your cousins when they studied the heavens, caring nothing for astronomy?'

It was always an effort to Antonia to plead for any point that involved hidden associations of feeling, the allusion to her cousin Anastasia brought no help in her need, and to add the stars to the wild flowers was a long contest for her; but, only changing colour for a moment, she held firmly on.

'I am afraid no one could forgive my not loving astronomy, uncle; but I never did like to learn it.'

'You like to believe the moon no larger than a plate? and that the sun most certainly revolves round the earth?'

'O no, uncle; I would not, for all the world, not have known the great facts which astronomy reveals, for their awful magnificence; but I do love to feel the stars near in the blue sky. I have watched so often for their shining down upon me, and could not bear to have to think of millions of millions of miles!'

'And why not? It makes it only the greater wonder that you see them at all?'

'Yes, uncle; but it is not the *wonder*, it is the *comfort* that I love, of looking up to their heavenly light.'

'What use can the comfort be, built on a fallacy? You are happy for thinking them near, when all the time you know they are as far off as ever astronomy declared them!'

'I know that miles must be miles upon earth, uncle; but I think that perhaps they are not up above; it seems as if angel-wings were not long in flying, and, therefore, perhaps distance may be all lessened up there, if motion be so swift! and so I don't want to learn all those numbers of distance, nor all that is only material of those glorious worlds, which we cannot tell the heavenly beauty and gladness of here, except by looking up to them with our eyes!'

'Well, well, little girl! I hold there is often as much philosophy in true feeling, as in any absolute deductions from facts; and though I glory in astronomy as the most magnificent of the sciences, I would not break in on your fancies; so you may live on, with your wild-flowers below, and your bright stars above!'—And the child went away in a sunbeam.

One anxious thought had long been buried deep in Antonia's heart. The Bible, so honoured in the home of her childhood, was never seen by her in the mansion now sheltering her youth. Vainly had she looked around, and as vainly listened for any passing words that might prove it was hidden in the heart. Little could she dream that her aunt was already, day after day, looking down on the sacred page in secret, lured on to its study, by the light it

had diffused over her own young life,—this she could not discern. Neither had she recognised her eldest cousin, Anastasia, as one who walked by the law of the Lord. In Anastasia there was but little of the self-denying love, the meekness, and gentleness of those who walk in the spirit of the Divine Son of Man. Her parochial efforts were a pursuit agreeable to the natural temperament of her character, they did not, therefore, involve much self-denial. In her home, where abundant opportunity was afforded for the real exercise of unselfish feeling, it was so rarely practised, as not even to be expected from her; Anastasia must be left unhindered in her own plans, and undisturbed in her own way, or more discomfort than benefit was sure to be the result. It was by Anastasia that the cold, harsh judgment, or the cutting remark, was uttered; and on no one did it fall so often as on Antonia. The cause of this seemed to be a secret jealousy of the love Antonia won from all around. Little could such a spirit as Anastasia's conceive the suffering it inflicted, not for the moment alone, but sometimes leaving long-troubled remembrance, bringing the cloud over Antonia's bright brow, and wrong feelings to her heart; but the still deeper and abiding effect was to keep the orphan close clinging to Him who 'gathereth the lambs with his arm, and carrieth them in his bosom;' the well-spring of his love, and the dew of His blessing, kept her spirit unbroken and buoyant, like the nautilus on the ocean wave. Without doubt Anastasia wished her own life to be, and believed that it was, a transcript of the Divine precepts; but

Antonia was as yet too little acquainted with such defaced resemblances to Heaven to be able to recognise Anastasia, and, therefore, her sorrow grew deeper, that in the family of her adoption the Bible seemed unrecognised, unhonoured, unloved.

At length, taking courage from the kindness with which her uncle had talked with her of the flowers and the stars, she ventured one day to carry her own little Bible to the study, and taking the stool on which she read German at his side, she said earnestly, 'I read so many beautiful books to you, uncle, but I never read with you the most beautiful of all! May I read a chapter of the Bible with you every-day?'

Her uncle looked displeased: 'No, Antonia: you read with me for the improvement of your mind: the Bible is a book of devotion!'

'O uncle, indeed it is not *only* devotion! it is everything that is beautiful—all in this one book.'

'I hold it to be a devotional book for the closet, Antonia; and if I am wrong in my belief, I am too old to go to school now and learn differently.'

'O no, uncle, not too old! it says the angels desire to look into these things, and we know they have lived thousands of years!'

'I cannot answer for the angels, Antonia; but I have told you my belief, and therefore let me have no more requests on that subject.'

Heavily fell the denial on the young heart whose hopes

and fears had long trembled intensely for the relatives so dear to its affections. Had it not been that the peace of God sustains every spirit that suffers in witnessing for His will, Antonia could hardly have gone through the reading of that day. Her uncle was cold and distant in manner that day and many days; the heroism of the appeal was too high and too deep for his penetration—unlighted by Heaven—to estimate; little did he think, or could he tell, that the love, the strength, the convictions of the young spirit at his side, had been concentrated in that long-contemplated, long-prepared-for effort! He had turned away—it seemed to have been fruitless; but it was not—it could not be lost—there is a record on high! And a silent effect is often left where all may seem in vain, which in after time may lend its force to fresh influences, combining with them to a blessed result.

Antonia could not fail to feel intensely her uncle's chilled manner. Clara remarked it to Anastasia, who replied that she had long been expecting her father to discover that a child indulged in every fancy was not one to prove absolute perfection in the end! Little Leonore felt it, and was always, when she could, getting silently close to Antonia's side. Miss Keymer saw it, and was sorry. But a deepened tenderness in Mrs. North's tone and manner fell on Antonia, not shown to any one else; Antonia felt it, but knew not why it was given. The child bore on with all her loving and lovely attentions to her uncle, and to each one, until at length the cloud rolled away, and left the sunshine

around her, warm and bright as before; her character only deepened and strengthened by the struggle of feeling and effort which her young spirit had passed through.

'To-morrow is Antonia's birthday,' Clara whispered to her father, as the third autumn of Antonia's residence in her uncle's family drew on.'

'A good prompter!' said her father, looking down pleased on Clara, who, having imparted the information which she thought might prove a pleasure, was again lost in the angles of a mathematical problem.

'Best of happiness and long life to you, little girl!' said her uncle at first sight of Antonia the next morning, 'fifteen years to-day! I am right, am I not?'

'Yes, uncle,' said Antonia, as she threw her arms round his neck.

'We will keep the day with an adventure,' continued General North, 'you and I will have a holiday *for once!* I have ordered old Blenheim to be brought out with a side-saddle for you!'

Antonia looked delighted; but Mrs. North exclaimed, 'You surely are not in earnest? You will not think of putting the child on that impetuous old war-horse?'

'O, trust me, my dear; it is only when Blenheim wants to persuade you that he and his master are young enough for service again, that he chafes at the bit and gets up his spirit a little! Let Antonia see what he will say to the rein in her hand, and I will look to her safety.'

General North had once reckoned on always finding com-

panions in his children. Anastasia and Clara had both been early trained to ride at his side, but as they grew older, he had so seldom found them ready to accompany him, that he had parted with their horse in vexation. The fact was, that the General would never regulate his rides by schoolroom hours. Miss North often said, 'Really I should have been most happy to ride with papa, if I could have been sure of the time of returning; but it always depends on the fancy papa may take at the time. I assure you he is always seeing some point in the distance that reminds him of some scene in his Peninsular wars, or some other association as far-fetched, and off we go such a chase after these resemblances, which generally are not the least like when we reach them, so that I have been out sometimes three hours, when I had only arranged for one; and then everything gets put out of the way, and all for a mere fancy of the moment!'

The same reason made it a rare event for Clara to be spared from the schoolroom; and the often ill-concealed feeling of inconvenient haste for return, quite destroyed the interest to their father. But Antonia had no fetters to bind her; and this long and wild wandering no one knew where, could not fail to be the very thing to delight her, and to give her fresh vigour in mind and body.

Antonia and old Blenheim were not strangers. General North often looked in at his stables and invited his children to go with him; only Antonia and the little Leonore went now. Antonia had from the first made Blenheim her favourite, and his full fiery eye always turned at the sound of her

voice; she liked to stand by, and feed and stroke him, and think of the wonderful scenes he had passed through, bearing her brave uncle so often where death environed them both; but a far deeper throb often rushed faint through her heart, as she stood by the old war-horse, for it was on Blenheim that the vain attempt had been made by her uncle to rescue her father! And now it was her birthday, and Blenheim stood saddled for her. Her uncle held the rein.

'Remember, little girl, old Blenheim's a war-horse, and if you show any fear, you will never ride him again; he has carried none but the brave, and he would soon help a coward to the ground!'

Antonia greeted Blenheim with her own voice and hand; he returned the caresses by arching his neck and pawing the ground: then, springing up lightly, she took the rein and was ready.

Now at length the General had found the free companionship in which he delighted. To give chase to every fancy, to listen to the record of every association; to hear of heroes who fell for their country, and of the touching incidents that the life of the warrior unfolds, possessed a ceaseless charm for Antonia. Her mind had acquired the power of concentrating its interest on the object before her; if Nature only, she was lost in earth and sky; if congenial companionship, she shed on it the light of her own rejoicing spirit; if any talked with her, she forgot herself in their theme, and gave reply, not in surface assent, but from the depth of a reflect-

ing judgment or deep-rooted feeling. When she read, the same entireness of attention was fixed on the record, until the spirit of all the written lore that she loved blended itself so entirely with her spirit, that knowledge in her seemed not borrowed, but rather as having fed the reservoir of her own reflective mind, from thence flowing forth in native streams, which bore freshness and pleasure to others. That which her young spirit had drunk of most deeply, was the pure truth of Divine inspiration. Long had she looked down into the depths of humiliation there revealed—long gazed upward into the heaven of glory there opened—long pondered on the sublime conceptions and historic facts there unfolded in majestic simplicity, until the temple of Divine truth had become her spirit's home. There she wandered freely as the child Samuel in the holy place at Shiloh; and when she looked upon any truth, as yet hidden from her understanding, she still waited in spirit at "the posts of its doors," until they unclosed before her and she entered in. Sometimes it was but a few minutes, sometimes months or years, that she waited expecting, but still evermore it did unfold before her, and she with assurance entered in.

This secret life of deep communion formed her, not as into a servant—acting in obedience to a sense of duty, but a child, breathing freely the air of the Divine home of her eternal adoption. Its light beamed from her eyes, its joy flowed from her lips, its love glowed in her life, and its truth gave an elevation to her thoughts, words, and feelings—simple, childlike, and natural; in the faint likeness of her sin-

fallen humanity to His, who knew no sin, and whose spirit breathes harmony even from chords discordant in the souls where He abides, she grew in "wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man."

CHAPTER IV.

In the following spring Leonore's pale looks made her parents anxious. The doctor said she would be the better for giving up all application of mind for a time, and getting the bracing of the sea air. Mrs. North was also glad herself of the strengthening change; so Leonore was taken by her parents to the sea.

The little girl wandered the greater part of the day upon the silver sands, picking up the shells, and watching the sea-birds poising their snowy wings, and lighting down to feed; or she sat upon the shingle, listening to the murmur of the waves as they broke upon the shore. The child had no resources within herself; she might have had, but they had never been called out; her young life had been spent in taking in, with no giving forth, and now that her animal spirits flagged, from the over-pressure of the schoolroom, her life, in this temporary relaxation, was of a very negative character. Her thoughts seemed to have only one definite direction, for when her father fancied that he traced some positive exercise of mind in her face, and said, 'A silver sixpence for your thoughts, my little unfledged linnet,'

the answer invariably was, 'I was only thinking of Antonia!' That orphaned heart, with its own bright power, unselfish love, and unfettered freedom, had already become a rallying point to many a heart around it, almost ere its childhood had deepened into youth. Why had the little Leonore no spring of thought, grave or gay, as the case might be? Why had she no ready power and watchful eye for all the ceaseless and gentlest courtesies of life, so lovely when they cluster in bright blossoms on the tender spray of childhood? Why must her days of relaxation be a mental and moral negation, instead of only a varied channel of cultivation? The answer would prove the key to unlock many a young mind and heart, whose early fragrance, whose childhood's power to bless, is shut up and lost, because the obvious question is unasked, or its easy answer undiscovered.

'It is ten thousand pities we did not bring Antonia! The poor little fish is out of water away from her schoolroom; you and I are too old for her; Antonia would have given her spirits!' Mrs. North agreed with the General, but the distance was an obstacle in the way of any alteration of arrangement; so Leonore had her parents and the ocean to herself alone.

But as the weeks passed on there came a time when a change passed over all things to the child on the sea-shore. Not finding Leonore improve, Mrs. North wished to try the sea-bathing for her, and the General used all his powers of observation in selecting the most promising of the bath-

ing-women; she was of middle age, tall, bony, and brisk. Betty Briggen's first look on the child was like the sunbeam that, at the same moment, was playing on the rough features of the craggy point that towered above the sands where they stood. 'Poor bit of a morsel! she'll have more flesh and blood to show off than that, when Betty Briggen has tossed her a few dozens of times in the salt sea, I'll engage! Come along, my little dear; we three will soon be the best friends together!' 'We three' meant Betty Briggen, the ocean, and the child; and the prophecy proved true; every day brought new vigour to Leonore; the ocean became the most delightful of playfellows, and Betty Briggen a most refreshing companion.

Betty Briggen was one of those bright characters who, instead of weighing how much they must do, are always ready to do all that they can; she did not measure out her time and her strength by avoirdupois weight, but suffered it to flow freely, according to the estimate given in by her kind true heart of the demands of the case before her. This native generosity is sometimes said not to answer, because there are always those who are ready to take an ungenerous advantage of it; and if the question were between human hearts alone, it is probable that the more selfish calculation would prove the most expedient; but happily it is not so left, and as long as it is written, "With the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again," we may be quite sure that, in some way or other, the most generous nature will be the largest receiver.

Betty Briggen was delighted to perceive the success of her professional exertions for the child, and extended her efforts in every direction. In her unengaged hours she led her up the high cliffs, by little winding paths known well to the dwellers on the shore; she led her to the creeks to catch crabs; and to the sands, to which they waded without shoes and stockings, for scuttle-fish; she hastened up, when a heavy tide was ebbing, to fetch the child to hunt for amber, and was continually receiving and entertaining her at their cabin. Bill, the husband of Betty, was a fine fresh-hearted sailor, carrying on the fishing trade to a considerable extent on that shore; and Leonore was never tired of sitting in his boat listening to his tales of the watery deep. At length, one soft summer evening, when the sea's green expanse was only waved by the ripple that flowed on, falling gently back from the shore, Bill Briggen protested that it was a shame to sit there, as if there were no salt sea to sail on; and now, when the ocean lay as still as the land, he would just catch up an oar, and give Leonore a waft of the breeze that lay lagging on shore, but would blow ten times as fresh when they had rowed out to a few fathoms of sea. Leonore, and her good friend the bath-woman, hand in hand hastened back to the lodgings to present the request; fortunately only General North was within, and having accompanied them back, and satisfied himself that all was likely to be as safe as the fisherman's care and a calm summer evening could make it, he gave his ready consent to the venture.

Mrs. North was not a little disquieted at the permission the General had given; it was not alone the danger of trusting the child out at sea, with a fearless fisherman and his wife, but the apprehension of what might be the effect of all this familiar association with a grade of society so low as the poor fisherman's must be! General North responded with earnestness of feeling, 'Do trust to my judgment for once during this breach in the schoolroom! I believe this perfect freedom will prove the saving of the child, not only in health but in character! Trust me, there is more of real value to be gathered, very often, in familiar intercourse with the cottage, than the mansion. In the homes of our peasantry the child finds life as it is, with no tricking out of fashion or outside of flattery; it is the real life that there becomes familiar, with its struggles, and ventures, its soon satisfied necessities, its honest opinions, and true-hearted feelings. You possessed a natural ascendancy of mind, that rendered you independent of circumstances, but our girls have not the same possession; and unless you will allow Leonore to mingle freely, and blend herself with different circumstances and characters, you will have her, like her sisters, a counterpart of my best time-pieces—keeping time true enough, but having little to offer for refreshment or comfort!' The General spoke quietly, but his deep-seated feeling of disappointment was evident. Mrs. North replied that she had arranged for Anastasia's season in London as soon as her education had been finished. Anastasia certainly had had asso-

ciation enough with different circumstances and characters, but it could not be said to have answered. The General again replied, 'Believe me, my dear, it is likely to prove a failure if you wait until this so-called education is finished; you send them out then self-conscious young women, their characters neither enlarged, strengthened, nor softened by association with the varied circumstances that life opens to the estimation of the child. You wait until the most plastic time for the *good* effect of associations has passed by; not lending them to it until they are in danger of being far more occupied with themselves than with others. You see what Anastasia and Clara are; if we fix hours for their definite employment with us we are sure to have them, but as to their power or will to observe when a little free companionship might be agreeable, their minds are so entirely pre-occupied that they never think of it. And if they did, it would—from want of skill in ready adaptation—set on them like an ill-fitting garment, which disturbs you whether you will or no.' Mrs. North remained sorrowfully silent, and the General said he would go and look out for Leonore.

The father returned with the child, who rushed in glowing with life and delight, and laden with treasures from the deep; with histories of porpoises really seen, and the silver-shelled nautilus looked for in vain, and the charges given to Bill Briggen, and his faithful promise, if he caught one in his net, to keep it for her; until Mrs. North smiled, and the General, with a hearty laugh, cried, 'Well done, little fishwoman!'

There had been no shade left on that mother's beautiful countenance when she welcomed back the father and child; and yet there might have been if earth had been all! for to have planned an education only for time, and then to have her plan thought all mistaken, and to have a secret misgiving at heart that it was so, and a certainty that its result was not happy; even without one word of upbraiding, was trying to bear; but when the General left to look for Leonore, Mrs. North's thoughts reverted to Antonia; the loveliness of her young, self-forgetting life beamed on her heart's warm remembrance, and she went to her chamber, and turned to the Prophets—inseparably linked in her thoughts with Antonia. She did not think she found much for herself; but the water of life descends on the spirit that submits itself to its influence, like the dew—silent and unperceived it may be, but lo! freshness is there where all felt dry and withered before. Mrs. North had reached the verse in the Prophet Hosea, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord," and was pondering upon it, when she heard the happy child asking for her mamma. Mrs. North closed the Bible, and met the child at her door.

So from that day the little Leonore was a sailor. Her new wild life was delightful. She listened, close sheltered at Betty Briggen's side, to the fisherman's long tales; he sang for her, out at sea, his wild songs, 'the rare best' that he knew. Leonore sang hers in return, and her tremulous voice, released from the fear of being out of time or of tune, blended freely with murmuring breakers and breezes,

until it gained expansion and strength. Her new friends were not wanting in knowledge,—the fruit of their simple observation of nature, and faithful record of facts. And Leonore knew tales of the battle-field and the camp, which she had heard from her father; the fisherman declared he had never, in all his lifetime before, known so much of what was done by the landsmen! And when Leonore told of her brave Uncle Percy, and her father's vain effort to save him; and of Antonia, his child, whom they all loved so dearly; and Antonia's certainty that her father was in Heaven, because he loved the Bible more than all things on earth, Bill Briggen wiped away a falling tear, and said he wished enough they could get a Bible to look to, for without that he could no way tell how they should ever get up where such a gentleman was gone! Day after day the child felt as free as the birds on the sea and the shore, beneath the ministering kindliness of the fisherman and his wife. Now, for the first time since she entered the schoolroom, did she know what it was to be perfectly unfettered and unburdened. It was liberty of body and mind. No reproof for awkward movement, or necessity to correct every inaccurate expression; and the tension caused by the terrible array of lesson-books, pianofortes, drawing-boards, globes, slates, and composition in a small way of themes, all melted away in one bright, healthful delight, in earth, sea, and sky.

Miss Keymer felt herself very much at liberty without her youngest pupil, and in her kindness she asked Antonia whether she could render any assistance in her studies,

during General North's absence. Antonia met the offer most thankfully, and her request was actually for instruction in French!

'Without the syntax, I suppose?' said Miss Keymer, with a smile; but Antonia was ready now to attempt all its difficulties. So the compact was settled, and each day saw Antonia with her cloudless brow, in the schoolroom, with Miss Keymer and Clara, in full pursuit of the acquirement of French.

'If there be anything else in which you would like my help, you had better ask me now, while I have so good an opportunity,' again said that kind-hearted Miss Keymer.

'I hardly like to ask you,' replied Antonia, 'but there is one thing I should so like to try, only I am afraid it might be troubling you in vain.'

'Never mind that, we can but try it; what is it?'

'When I watch the trees I often fancy I could draw them, if I might only begin with them just as they are, just as I have loved them ever since I can remember?'

'Draw from Nature, my dear, with no knowledge of perspective, or practice from copies! I am afraid, indeed, you have no idea of the difficulty!'

'I am afraid not, and I should be so sorry to give you trouble in vain! but I should not mind any difficulty, trying at what I love!'

'Well, then, I am sure you shall try; you had better find out some old trunk of a tree to begin with.'

'O no, not anything dead! I should like to draw a tree in its beauty, with all it has of life!'

'Very well, you can but try; perhaps you have chosen a tree to begin with?'

'Yes, the tree I long most of all to draw is that noble old beech, my uncle's chief favourite; if you will go with me, I shall be so glad! I will not tell any one except Clara, for fear I should not succeed.'

'You would not like to confess to a failure—is it so?'

'No, I don't think that was the feeling that made me wish to keep it secret; but I will make sure by settling that if I have to give it up I will tell all about it!'

'Very well, my dear, I am quite satisfied to be bound over to secresy, if possible; but I fear Miss North will find us out!'

The next day saw Antonia seated at Miss Keymer's side, in full view of the favourite old beech tree.

Antonia gazed and gazed upon the tree, as if she expected the inspirations that call forth the lay of the poet to glide through her fingers, in the likeness of the object before her.

Miss Keymer gave a little instruction to her pupil, but Antonia, again looking up, still gazed on the tree.

'Now, my dear, you cannot look your drawing into existence!'

'No, I will begin and try; but oh, how beautiful it is! those light green leaves, filled with sunbeams, look as if they were the only veil between us and Heaven!'

Miss Keymer would have said, 'Between us and the sky;' and the depth of feeling with which Antonia breathed out 'HEAVEN' arrested her attention. Antonia, still riveted by the radiance and beauty before her, as if again forgetting her drawing, added earnestly, 'Oh Miss Keymer, when one looks up to Heaven in such sunshine, it seems sad to have to wait still on earth for the clouds to come back again; only once an old man told me there was more growth in the cloudy weather than the bright, so the thought of that has made me thankful for sorrow!'

Miss Keymer had known sorrow; bereavements and losses had clouded her life; she had borne them as a necessity and a duty; but no lips had ever before, in her hearing, breathed 'thankfulness for sorrow;' the words fell on her heart; but it was not a subject on which she felt prepared to converse, so she continued silent, and Antonia, looking down on the paper, began her attempt on the tree.

Day after day the attempt was renewed; it was long before the monarch of the beech-wood stood erect on Antonia's drawing-board; and for a considerable time longer its foliage either stuck on, or fell forlorn and languid away; but by the time of her uncle's return a huge copy of his favourite tree was produced, bearing sufficient resemblance to be recognised at sight.

Anastasia had not failed to inquire, 'Where is Miss Keymer?' on missing her from the schoolroom.

Clara replied, 'Gone to the woods with Antonia.'

'O, indeed! Miss Keymer seems to be everything now;

I really must say if I had been laid on the shelf as Miss Keymer was, I should have felt it a duty to myself to be a little less easy in meeting every after demand!' But the secret of the tree standing for its picture remained undiscovered.

When Antonia had once begun her drawing she returned to it every day with all the vivid interest of her young, ardent spirit; and, except a passing exclamation now and then, as she proceeded, no more gushing thoughts preluded her employment. Yet sometimes Miss Keymer caught the glance of the child's fathomless eyes, as they looked up to Heaven; and she silently pondered on what the secret could be which so linked that young heart to the skies; she would not have been sorry if Antonia had of her own accord spoken out her feelings again, for Miss Keymer bore no shield of pride; she was literally, "swift to hear, slow to speak." Accomplished and well-informed, she possessed also a native refinement of mind, which alone is worth the whole array of mere mental acquirement, in those who train the young; she knew her position to be a subordinate one, and did not desire to step out of it; always occupied with others rather than herself, she had won the settled regard and respect of every member of the family and household. Religion she looked upon as a divine formula, to which she was to endeavour to conform her spirit and life; to the will of the Divine Being, it was her duty to submit; and through His mercy she aspired to His Heaven hereafter. Since Miss North's visit to London, Miss Keymer had observed that it was her practice to read

the Bible for a certain time every morning; it was a fact that won Miss Keymer's respect, though it awoke no longing to participate; but the depth of Antonia's young voice, when she breathed out the word 'HEAVEN,' and the look that she sometimes raised to the sky, clung to Miss Keymer, and left the abiding conviction that the child had a secret which *she* knew not.

And now the last week of the sea-side sojourn had arrived. General North had acted as generously towards Leonore's friends as his liberality was sure to dictate; but he also wished Leonore to leave with them some parting token of her own kind and grateful feeling.

'Well, my little Linnet, I am thinking what present you would like to leave with Betty Briggen and her husband, in remembrance of you.'

'O papa, may I give something, and whatever I like?'

'Something you certainly may, but whatever you like is a considerable addition! Have you been thinking of anything?'

'I should like, papa, best of all, to give them a Bible.'

'A Bible, little innocent! they would not thank you for that! There is but small chance they can read; and fishermen and bathing-women don't care about books!'

'O yes, papa, indeed they would! Bill Briggen said he wished he had a Bible; and I know he can read, because Betty showed me some old bits of newspapers which, she said, some visitors gave them last summer, and her husband, she said, was always spelling them over to her.'

General North thought that Leonore had got hold of a curious collection of facts; his own idea was that Leonore should present them with a time-piece to hang on their cabin walls; but, in his kindness, he decided that they would pay a visit to the cabin together, and endeavour to find out which would really be most welcome, the time-piece or the Bible; and Mrs. North expressed her wish to accompany them.

Leonore was in high spirits as she ran on into the cabin, where her little fairy form was the brightest vision it had seen since it first was upreared. There was a considerable stir within at hearing that madam was coming, and a chair, two or three times dusted, was set for her reception.

'Well, my good friends,' said the General, 'we are come to take leave; as for that little maid she is almost half yours by this time! I don't know how long she will take to forget the sea and her friends!'

'O papa, I shall never forget! I only wish Antonia could come, and we stay here all the summer!'

'Well, well, I am sure we all have reason to remember the kindness shown. I wish to know whether you don't find it a terrible want to be without a time-piece of any description?—I mean a clock or watch.'

'Ah, your honour,' said Bill, as the General's meaning lightened upon him, 'you see we poor folk live with Nature, where the gentry live with Art; and you see, sir, to the poor man, 'tis Nature's own finger is always pointing the time; every slant of the sunbeams, as they mark out the

shadows, every ripple of the wave as it flows on the shore, and the line of wet sand where it falls, the stars floating up above, and the first light of the dawn—there's no mistake in them, for if I reckon right 'tis them as makes the time.'

'But your wife, she must get behindhand, sometimes, with no clock to keep her in mind?'

Here Betty answered for herself, 'I'll just beg your pardon, sir, but if a gentleman can be mistaken, it's just certain you are in that, for Betty Briggen never stepped behind time in her life! There is one of our women lives out yonder there,—you can see where by the smoke whiff,—she's got a right up clock, it struck the hour she was born and every hour since, and yet she is always a lagging—keeping gentlefolks waiting, and when they tell her 'tis late, she says 'twas early by her!' 'By you, indeed!' says I, 'and pray what are you to be after setting down all nature for wrong, because your old bit of leaded cord gets lazy in heaving up itself to its measure? Trust me,' says I, 'for ever selling my senses for a striker, that has none!—So I gave it her! She'll never keep true time—that's certain; but 'twas the last of her setting up against Nature!'

The fisherman and his wife had so entirely maintained the General's favourite assertion—that observation was the surest inlet of knowledge, that he could freely forgive all the disparagement thrown on every species of clock-work, save Nature's own finger, as she ceaselessly arrested her children's attention to the progress of time. But now,

having nothing left to offer, he looked to Leonore, and said, with a smile, 'Your papa is fairly done for; you must try your fancy now!'

Leonore understood, and, childlike, she began with no round about investigations, such as honestly belong to the materials of time, but went straight to the mark, as was worthy of the things that are eternal. Looking up to Bill Briggen and his wife, she said, in a tone that seemed conscious she was offering what they would consider the chiefest gift upon earth, 'Would you not like best of all to have a Bible?'

'Ah, dear!' replied the old fisherman, 'that's the hardship of poverty. I can tell your honour, if you'll credit a poor man that never went far from the truth in his life, 'tis not the dragging the rough seas, and coming home wringing wet, with no fish in the net; 'tis not the scant morsel, nor the cold wintry cabin,—we as live along with Nature can put up with her usage,—but 'tis the look up above, and the want of a notion how to get there! I often tell my old girl here, that I know well enough some rough winter's night the old sea will be my grave; 'tis not that I stand in dread of,—'tis what a spirit may meet with if it gets the launch off from this shore with no notion, as I say, how to make for the other!'

The General did not reply, for he could not; but little Leonore exclaimed, 'Papa will give you a Bible; indeed he will!'

'Heaven bless his honour! 'twill be the rarest gift that

ever my life will see. I take it there's not so much as one in a cabin on this coast. I have got some scraps of papers which some gentlefolks gave me last summer.' Bill brought out from a corner three or four blackened old tracts, which Leonore, unacquainted with such documents, had supposed to be pieces of newspaper. 'I have spelled them all over twenty times to my mis'es here, but 'twas one word in them that first grappled me, and I have never got clear from his hold. There, sir, your honour can read it: 'tis that word "ETERNITY," set up at the head of the whole. Ah! I has yet to hoist sail in them seas, and not a notion how to pilot 'em!'

'Your wish for a Bible shall soon be granted,' replied the General; 'may it prove all the blessing you desire!'

When the Bible was purchased, Mrs. North wrote in it the names of the sailor and his wife, as a gift from Leonore, adding beneath the full address of their own residence; and giving the precious treasure to Leonore to carry alone, she desired her to tell the fisherman and his wife that if they were ever in any trouble they might write as to friends, who would do anything in their power to help them. The scene in the cabin was one passing description, when the fisherman and his wife, the child and the Bible, all met there for the first and the last time together.

They started early for the long journey on the day of return. About four o'clock in the afternoon the beech-woods came in sight, then the house, then the door.

'Antonia! Oh, there is Antonia!' was Leonore's first

exclamation of delight; and before the steps could be let down she was in Antonia's embrace. Antonia gave one hug of delighted welcome to her uncle, as he alighted, and springing in to her aunt in the carriage, threw her arms around her neck. Tenderly, closely, did Mrs. North fold the orphan to her heart; there was no questioning the love of that embrace, or the depth of the kiss that she pressed on the child's fair brow. Anastasia and Clara waited on the door-steps with an affectionate greeting. Within the door stood Miss Keymer, Mrs. North not only gave her her hand, but bent forward and kissed her. Sixteen years had Miss Keymer filled her place in General North's family, with conscientious faithfulness, with retiring refinement, propriety, and cheerfulness. Sixteen years had she received the respect and kind attentions of the whole household, but that first token of affection from its dignified mother made for her the happiest moment since she entered the house. Then, amidst the household rejoicing, the seniors, of whom Clara was now one, prepared for dinner, and the two children for tea with Miss Keymer.

'O Miss Keymer, if you please let me go a little this beautiful evening with Antonia to the woods.'

'My dear, you have done quite enough for one day in taking all that long journey, you had better keep quiet this evening.'

Antonia assured Leonore that she did not want to go out, and would stay in with her; but Leonore still pleaded, 'Do, pray do, let me go, Miss Keymer! May I just ask mamma?'

It was one peculiarity of Miss Keymer's feeling that she never, on any occasion, refused a pupil's request to appeal from her decision to a parent's. On one occasion, when the result of such an appeal had cost her a good deal of annoyance, she was heard to say, that she would rather go through anything than deny that to a child. When the appeal was made under sentence of disgrace, she only stipulated that all should be told, leaving it then to the child's right feeling and honour; this generosity had its recompense! Miss Keymer herself would have denied the earnest request in this instance; she was not quite without the feeling that it was an abstract good occasionally to accustom children to receive a denial of their wishes, for no very stringent reason, except that they might learn to take a denial;—a serious mistake in itself, but rendered very harmless in Miss Keymer's practice, because of this always open safety-valve of appeal to a parental heart, whose will was requirement sufficient for all lawful obedience. Miss Keymer did not know by instinct that the young spirit sometimes pleads earnestly for that which at the moment may to others seem but a fancy, but which to deny may tell on a lifetime. But Mrs. North could understand the longing to go off at once with Antonia, and gave consent.

There, in the bright glade, the children sat side by side, on the rustic bench which the gamekeeper had twisted for Antonia. Embosomed in the solitude of Nature, the little Leonore felt free to pour out her full heart. It was not of the ocean or the shore that she longed so to tell, but of her

friends of the cabin, and the Bible. Antonia sat with her arm around Leonore; and as her young confiding companion told of her last visit to the cabin, when she bore to her friends the blessed guide for Eternity, Antonia drew her closer to her side, until, at the conclusion, kissing fervently the infant lips that had breathed forth a tale so beautiful, she exclaimed, 'O Leonore! dear Leonore, I never yet gave a Bible to any one!'

The child felt the happy individuality this declaration from Antonia gave to that which had been her first venture in the service of love, and it diffused a fresh courage through her spirit. Then, after a few moments' silence, in which the summer evening's stillness around lay unbroken to them, for, entranced in thought and feeling, they heard not the songs of the birds nor the music of the river below, Antonia looking down upon Leonore, still clinging to her side, said, 'Shall we ask God to make the Bible to be the same to Bill Briggen and his wife that it was to dear papa?'

'Yes,' answered Leonore, half doubting, half questioning, for none had ever before invited her to kneel in free utterance, as of children to their Father in Heaven. Another moment, and the child of fifteen years with the child of eleven knelt side by side on the soft mossy bank. There, in the stillness of the first fall of the twilight, with the giant beech-trees o'er-canopying their young uncovered heads, kneeling in their frocks of snowy white on the blue-bells still purpling the woods in that bright evening of June, they looked up to Heaven, while Antonia breathed forth their supplication.

The orphan's deepest thought was of the soldier on the battle-field, Leonore's of the seaman on the rough ocean wave, but in each heart both were blended, while the tears of entreaty fell from their eyes. Then, rising, they lingered not for the last gleam of the sunbeam, or the light of the first silvery star, but hastened home, their hearts bound to each other in the love that is eternal.

Before Leonore went to her slumber that evening, Antonia privately showed her the large likeness of the beech-tree. Leonore had not yet attempted drawing from nature, and her astonishment was great at finding what Antonia had learned in the woods. Mahola, the housemaid, faithfully promised to awake Antonia before six o'clock the next morning, which promise she faithfully performed. Soon after seven o'clock Antonia was in the library, where with Mahola's assistance she hung up the long sheet over which the beech-tree extended.

One by one, as all entered the room to the family breakfast, at eight o'clock, General North exclaimed, 'I am looking out for the guilty face: there is some one who has been transplanting my best old beech-tree from the woods to my study, and I am determined to know who it is!'

'O papa! papa!' said Leonore, running in before Antonia, by way of diversion.

'No, no, my little fishwoman, it is none of your doing; you are a great deal too innocent for such a performance yet. If it had been a nautilus sailing in a basin, I might have suspected you and Bill Briggen, but not in my beech-tree's

removal. My dear,' as Mrs. North entered, 'I am holding a court-martial; pray come and assist me. Miss North?'

'I have not the least idea to what you are referring,' Miss North replied dryly, at perceiving that something had been achieved without any communication with her.

'Well, well,' replied her father, 'you, at all events, look not guilty. Come, Clara, there is no one to prove culprit but you, and to show how you have pleased your old father by getting up this little surprise, you shall ask him any reasonable wish, and he will promise to grant it.'

Clara replied, 'Indeed, papa, I wish I had done it! I am sure I would have tried long ago if I had thought you would care so much for a copy of a tree you could see any day!'

All this unexpected turn was almost too much for poor Antonia, who went up to her uncle and said hurriedly, 'It was only kind Miss Keymer taught me drawing and French while you were away, uncle, and I just put it up to surprise you.'

'I must give the history, I think,' said Miss Keymer, now taking up the subject, and telling, with a glow of feeling, the pains and the interest Antonia had taken in the hope of surprising her uncle.

'Well, well, little girl,' said the General, who saw that Antonia would not stand a great deal more, 'you have surprised your old uncle indeed; and he will keep you fast by his colours, and make you his aid-de-camp some day—that he will! and now come along, and bring in the tree.'

'Very well done, my dear child,' said Mrs. North: 'I shall be happy when Leonore can do its fellow.'

Miss North thought it only justice to remark that much indeed must be due to Miss Keymer!

Clara said warmly, 'Is it not well done, papa?' And little Leonore sat down under its shadow.

Until presently all subsided into the breakfast repast; after which General North fixed the tree to the wall of his dressing-room. But before the breakfast-table was forsaken, Mrs. North said, 'The promised wish must be Antonia's, as she has earned the reward.'

General North would have left this part of the subject untouched again, because he had read the quick flushing feeling in Antonia's expressive face; this Mrs. North had not noticed, and she did not like Antonia's effort to appear less thought of than Clara's would have been. The General could not now pass it over, so he said cheerily, in a tone Antonia well understood, 'Now, wish, little girl, and it is granted, on such conditions as were promised before.'

'I have wished, then,' said Antonia, looking up again with sunny eyes.

'Tell it out, then,' said her uncle.

'O no! I cannot tell it out,' replied Antonia; 'it was aunt who said that I must wish; and I can't tell any one until aunt says it is reasonable.'

'O, tell it, Antonia! do tell!' exclaimed Leonore.

'No, not one word of it, even to uncle, unless aunt says it is reasonable,' said Antonia again.

'Never mind,' said the General in a low tone to Leonore; 'mamma will tell me, and I will tell my little fishwoman, if she can keep a secret.'

'O, yes, papa, I can——'

'Hush! hush!' whispered the General; and all the party separated.

Faithful to his promise, the General told Leonore that Antonia had wished for a pony for her, that she might ride over the hills with them. Mrs. North had thought it not reasonable at present, because of Leonore's long idle time at the sea, but some day it should certainly be granted. Leonore was of course delighted with the secret, and only told Miss Keymer, who looked alarmed, and Clara, who hoped she would enjoy her rides when she had them, and Chetwind, the housekeeper, and Mahala, and her mamma's maid, and the old coachman,—all under promise of secresy, and then waited in hope for the anticipated fulfilment.

The summer breathed itself away in beauty. Many of its pleasant hours were spent by Miss Keymer with her two bright young pupils, Antonia and Leonore, drawing from nature in the woods. After Christmas Miss North paid another long visit to London, and the home party, not excluding Clara, fraternized more closely together. Leonore's sea-side expanding had completely freshened the little girl's whole being, and with Antonia at hand to aid in keeping every bright avenue open, she never relapsed into the mere child of the schoolroom again. From Antonia she had learned that prayer was the full confidence of a child

with its Father in Heaven, asking that which it desires to receive, seeking that which it longs to find, and knocking at His door, that it may be opened unto it. And often, when the little Leonore knelt alone by her bed at even-tide, she thought of the dark night at sea, and prayed for Bill Briggen the sailor.

The winter had passed away,—March had come in, with its dry wind and dust, and Antonia and Leonore were often peeping into the wild banks for the early spring flowers. It was on a March morning when, among the letters brought to General North at the breakfast-table, was one directed "To His Honour, General North, &c." It bore the post-mark of the little fishing town at which they had stayed on the coast, and its seal was black. General North opened it, and read,—

'Sir, your Honour, General North,

'In hopes this finds you well, and Madam, and the young darling lady, as it leaves me a poor desolate widow. Sir, it was with my poor Bill as he always said,—he went out, and returned home one dark night no more. "Bet," says he, "I'll take out our Bible no more; then, if I should be lost, you'll have that to cast anchor by." But he was always minding of it at home. He took wonderful notice of all it had to say of the sea; and that very last night, as he lighted up the lantern, and turned up that part where the good Lord came walking right firm where the worst sea was chafing, in the eye of the wind, and catched hold of the

hand of the poor fisher Peter, when he was lost, as we speak, in the tempesting waves, it seemed as if he knew all afore him, for he lifted up a prayer like to none but a last; and he said to me, "Bet," said he, "if your old man some night should come back with his fishnets no more, what we read from the Book will be the picture of he,—the waves all a tempest, and dark, and he sinking,—ah, then, Bet, there'll be a Hand that will catch hold of your Bill's, and heave him up to that life in ETERNITY. I shall know the Hand, Bet, for 'twill be His who was nailed on the tree. If it please the good God I should happen of that, don't you fret over the salt sea for me, but hoist a prayer up where the stars lie afloat up above! there's no tempesting waves for your old man up there, Bet, for He rules there who walked on the wind, and hushed up the storm with the breath of His mouth. O Bet," says he, as he turned off to go, "there's no sail skuds so fast afore a fresh breeze in our seas, as a prayer to them skies!" I was a letting him out, and didn't I note how there shone out a star from the darkness right above him as he spoke! And when I look up to them now, don't they seem to my senses all kindled brighter for joy that my poor Bill is up among them! And I got a friend to put these few words on paper, as Madam ordered I should. But I hope your Honour, and Madam, and the darling young lady will come again, though my poor Bill and his boat harbour no more on this shore, but I can do all as regular and well as before; and not one of the gentlefolks has found me lagging yet; but I take a lazy

step back again now, for there's no husband a-waiting; and sometimes I could just not go at all; only I take my first look at the Bible, and, though I can't read, I can tell where the words mostly lie, and they turn up in my mind with the sound of the voice of my old man. So no more at present from your unworthy servant,

'BETTY BRIGGEN.'

No eye was undimmed at that breakfast-table; poor little Leonore cried the greater part of the day over the letter, then laid it up—the first sacred treasure in the archives of her young life. Mrs. North wrote to the poor widow words of comfort, and sent temporal help in her need. Clara and Miss Keymer, each alone, turned over the leaves of the Gospels that day, looking long and intently on the words—"It is I," breathed by Him whose still small voice the roar of no tempest can drown; they looked on the prayer of the sinking Peter—"Lord, save me!" and thought of the hand stretched out to rescue and uphold on the surface of the sea's engulphing depths, until they longed that they, too, had the hope and the joy of Bill Briggen. To Clara it was a first glimpse of things eternal; but to Miss Keymer it seemed like an echo to the tone in which her young companion in the woods had breathed forth the word HEAVEN.

CHAPTER V.

General North's estate extended over the whole of the parish in which he resided, and included the greater portion of the adjoining parish. Pleasant farm-houses with their substantial out-buildings, and peasants' cottages nestling among the trees, presented a picture of temporal comfort, and bore witness to the residence of a liberal-hearted landlord. The General had a great respect for natural architecture, therefore along the village lanes grew, undisturbed, the brotherhood of trees, forming long vistas, living and transparent aisles, filled with the melody of heaven-taught choristers—who here and there along the whole extent, sometimes in solitary recitative, sometimes in choral harmony, poured forth their strains for love of their own melody. The parish in which the mansion stood was extensive and richly wooded; but the wildness of scenery in the adjoining parish left the strongest impression on the passer-by. At the Hall, this adjoining parish was familiarly called "The Alps," from the steepness of its hill-sides, and the wild ravines they enclosed. The church patronage of the parish in which he resided was in the hands of General North; but that of the Alpine parish was in the gift of the other pro-

prietor of the land, an aged Sir Roger de Lee, who had long ceased to visit his small estate, leaving it entirely to the management of a farming steward. The Rector of the Alps was an old man, and the Rectory, like its tenant, falling into decay. The clergyman of the parish in which the General resided was in the vigour of life; it would be difficult, however, to say in what way his parishioners had been the better for his active capabilities. Towards the close of the winter of which we have been speaking, the link that binds the pastor, in deed, or in word, to his flock, was severed in one awful moment, by that clergyman's premature death. The door stood open, and blessing divine and earthly might then have entered. Oh! if hereafter the eyes of many a pastor must look tremblingly upward, "when the Chief Shepherd shall appear;" will there then also be no "searchings of heart" in some of those with whom appointments so responsible were vested?

Tidings at this time arrived from abroad that Harry North had been in severe action, and was on his way home; he had received promotion, and was expected in the approaching month of May.

In April the General went up to London to bring Anastasia back to her home. Expectation of the sister's return raised no kindling of gladness, no overflowing of love; there were no young hearts counting the days, or weary spirits longing for the hour. She was coming, and she came, and affection received her; but the ordinary surface of the home was scarcely broken by even a ripple—so little bright fresh-

ening had Anastasia to give to its stationary waters. This was not the fault of education alone; it is true, that her education had entirely consisted in *relays of self*, self-acquirement, self-exercise, self-relaxation; but "pure and undefiled religion" is capable of correcting the evil tendencies of education, by offering to each heart the noblest aims, the strongest motives, the highest principles that created intelligences could aspire to. Why then was Anastasia—why are any who profess to have embraced it—earthly, selfish, contracted still? Will not each one who finds a nipping blight upon his faith, a chill upon his heavenly love, a shadow on his soul, aim to discover its true cause? Anastasia had no abiding determination to search her own heart's depths, or to bring her daily life, with all its words and all its feelings, to the clear light of Heaven; if she had done this her portrait on the written page would have worn a different aspect.

Anastasia North had taken up religion as an addition, rather than as a corrective, to her life. New views, new interests, and efforts, were adopted; but old things had not passed away. Self still held the secret recesses within. If any one opposed her wishes, her opinions, her feelings, it was evident that it was not the deep conviction of truth that rose up in love to the contest, but the impatient resentment of self-annoyance. The consequence was that she was as little opposed and interrupted as possible; and a current of thought and feeling flowed on, in the hearts of all with whom she was associated, apart from her observation and

participation. There were some whose friendship might have proved an ever-deepening blessing through life to Anastasia; but no sooner did the roots of their affection strike below the surface, and reach this subsoil of self in her, than the bright blossoming of their feeling faded away, leaving only so much vitality of friendship as could find nutriment on the surface strata of her well-informed mind, benevolent painstaking, and ordinary kindness. That highest talent of INFLUENCE, which radiates in every direction, diffusing around the possessor a perpetual circle of blessing—that highest talent, Anastasia buried in SELF.

Anastasia went through a great amount of exertion in her devotion to the business material of all things. She appeared to consider TIME and MONEY as the two most responsible talents for which she had to account; both these were measured out with ceaseless exactness. It was impossible not to feel sorry for her toil; seeing, if she could but have risen a little higher, those subordinate agents would have found their own level; and instead of being pent up between banks of equal distance, like a mercantile canal, with its narrow limits and circumscribed course; they would have flowed on like a heaven-directed river—whose source is in the eternal hills, and whose end is to be the measureless sea, flowing on in a fertilising stream—now slow and now rapid, now keeping on steadily through natural embankments, then breaking away and pouring forth freely as if knowing that its source is exhaustless; to whose brink none fear to approach, but all are free to receive whatever it can render, as it passes on to its rest in the deep sea at last.

Anastasia, also, was always taking the labouring oar; she seemed to know little or nothing of what it was to make her way by sometimes spreading sail, and trusting to the breath of heaven to fill it; the laboured strokes of the oar were more substantial, and therefore more satisfactory to her. Well the boatman could witness that sailing is no idle work! there must be a watchful eye, a right judgment, a ready hand; while yet the chief agent in view is the favouring breeze from the skies; but Anastasia felt always more at home with the labouring oar.

All things were done by her in regular appointments—one week was the picture of another. She went on as uniformly as an admirable piece of machinery, subject to slight incidental deviations, but righting itself again to the same equable motion. It followed of necessity that her character approximated to this uniformity of habit, and all freshness of thought and feeling by degrees ebbed away from her life. Even in her communing with the divine Word, she ceaselessly read a fixed portion; it might have been that at times a single sentence of infinite truth would have unfolded its depths and breathed forth its fragrance for her, absorbing the time allotted for her regular portion; but only to have read a single sentence would have been to Anastasia a most unsatisfactory employment of the time; not considering that to enter into the depths and heights of one infinite truth may occasionally be more enlarging, enriching, and elevating, than to pass over the surface of many, with only a more partial apprehension of their fulness.

As may be supposed, it was not very easy to Anastasia to receive and to act upon the suggestions of others; regulations and plans must be worked out of her own practice, evoked from her own mind, or at best, must entirely commend themselves to her judgment—a rare event where they proceeded from others, before she could throw herself into their carrying out. She knew very little of what it was to lend herself to the thought or feeling of another, and, like the bee, to gather the farina from every flower to work up into its own perfected honey.

"I am a matter-of-fact person!" Anastasia would not seldom declare; an assertion which no one for a moment thought of controverting, all being most entirely convinced of its truth; for no matter of fact, in Anastasia's sense of the phrase, could easily be concealed from her close and curious inquiry; but on matters of feeling, she would tread and retread again, like a blind man on the flowers of the spring, until they lay bruised and crushed beneath her weight, while she only thought herself making her own point good.

In her reading, Anastasia very generally made choice of such books as tell of the life of facts—the biography of men and women, to the exclusion of those which lead into more direct communion with the truth itself. She seemed also lost in the belief that what she *did* must be the agency to act on others, not what she *was;* but all such delusions must roll from the mind when realities alone break on the view; then will it be seen that less than a word—a look or a tone from a spirit trained in sympathy's resistless power,

or truth's unselfish love, may, and often will, in one passing glimpse, accomplish what the association of years with those devoted to the material of circumstances has failed to effect.

Anastasia's was a very even life; but it could not be called a very bright one. A shadow hung over and darkened it; she had no idea that the shadow fell from herself; on the contrary, she believed it the universal result of 'settling down into the sober realities of matters of fact.' Anastasia had learned in the schoolroom to *distinguish*, as an essential of knowledge in things material; but as to all that related to the moral world of action, thought, and feeling, she had no science by which to distinguish there. The mistakes, therefore, into which she fell, were equally unhappy in their result both on herself and on others. She was always confusing the respect and attention due to her *position*, with the affection and confidence which can be won only by *character;* she tried to exact the one no less than the other. She did not observe that the affection and confidence of the heart have been so created by God, that they are dependent on being called forth—they cannot give themselves to that which does not attract them, and every attempt to exact them only lessens their amount. She did not seem to remember that even the divine commandment, "My son, give me thine heart," lies powerless until the eyes of the understanding are enlightened to behold "the beauty of holiness;" and that the second command—completing the whole law—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is enjoined on the heart that has responded to the first; because this uni-

versal love to man could not be called forth except by the Great Father of all. Could Anastasia have realised this, and trained her own heart in the free exercise of unselfish love to others, she would not have had to experience the general short-coming of affection and confidence toward herself. As it was, she never drank deeply and abidingly of the cup of human happiness. One hour of such gladness as Antonia often felt, in the blessed consciousness of the love of Heaven and Earth, and her own delight in all that was lovely, might have diffused sunshine over a whole year of such a life as Anastasia's. And yet both dwelt together in one home, both had the same resources at command, both looked to the same eternal Hope.

One of General North's first announcements on his return from London with Anastasia, had been—'I have presented to the living.'

'Do you really mean so?' asked Mrs. North anxiously.

'Yes, I do; a promising man turned up, and I made him the offer. Can you guess who?'

'No; I only hope it is a different man from the last.'

'Your clerical cousin has to quit his present living because of the unhealthy locality. I only saw him the day before leaving town, and I offered it to him.'

'Has he decided to accept it?'

'Yes; how could he do otherwise? the very thing for him to step into! It was fortunate I had not made more haste in disposing of it. If your cousin had not been afloat, I should have waited for Harry's return.'

Mrs. North made no reply; a sadness in that moment had fallen on life. Not until that moment had she so fully realised that light had been dawning on all things around her. New wants, living hopes, and affections unfelt before, had awakened within her; and since the necessity for this new appointment had come, all these feelings had gathered around that appointment in undefined expectation. Yet, this new world she seemed entering was a misty one still; she felt that she was no longer where she once had been, but no clear apprehension had yet contemplated the heavenly features of divine truth—no steadfast glance yet made manifest to her the things unseen and eternal. She knew her cousin, and she knew he was not what she wanted. What she did want she could not have told; but she knew that shadows satisfied her soul no longer; she wanted that which she could now lean upon, and prove to be enduring. What it was she did not know; but she knew that he who was coming would not bring it, and her spirits sank in disappointment's depression.

The new rector arrived. The candle was placed on the candlestick, but, alas! no fire fell from heaven to kindle its flame, giving light to all around! He who had come, in profession, to serve the sanctuary, was one consecrated, in word only, to God; and the fire from heaven will descend on the altar of no unsanctified heart; the breath of the world is an atmosphere which, if it be admitted within, extinguishes the sacred ignition. The poor lifted their eyes and looked on the man, and, having done so, went forth again to

their work and their labour, until life's evening, then to lay down their toil-wearied limbs in the grave, unsoothed by a pastoral spirit's benediction. They soon settled what to expect, for they judged by the instinct of the heart, a quicker process, and often a surer one, than the reasoning of the mind; and but few among them cared to attend on the public ministry of one who lived not "as if he pleaded with men."

O England! had not thy Heaven-vowed sons arisen, shaken themselves from the dust, and put on their beautiful garments of truth, meekness, and righteousness—had they not arisen, and shod their feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and put on zeal as a cloak, surely thou hadst not now sat as a queen among the nations, with kings given as dust to thy sword, and as driven stubble to thy bow! But if thy risen church hath but scarcely saved herself and thee, what shall the end be of those of her sons, who, with 'light flashing from every point upon their darkness,' still refuse to obey the Gospel of God?

But He who sat on the well of Sychar, under the burden and heat of the day, and when the woman of Samaria uttered her expectation of One coming who would tell them all things, made answer, "I that speak unto thee am He," is still a God at hand; and many a lowly peasant finds Him where, in their untaught ignorance, they sought him not. And not the peasant only, but those no less who, like the noble of Candace's court, bend an inquiring spirit over "the record God hath given us of His Son;" asking of any Heaven-taught stranger who may cross their path, the light

of instruction to guide their wandering footsteps. "For thus saith the Lord God, behold I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out."

Mrs. North bore the sad burden of this disappointment in silence. She had started on her heavenward way under the influence of that one word '*alone;*' and now, though for a time she had thought that she should find some man to guide her; when that hope had faded before her, she turned back *alone* to 'the Prophets, the Gospels, the Psalms, and Epistles,' and found that "the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light!"

Anastasia was allowed to pursue her own plans in the parish unhindered. She soon engaged the new clergyman's daughters as her assistants in the Sunday-school, and the clergyman added his subscription in aid of the schools and the benevolent clubs of the parish.

When Harry North returned from abroad, it was a bitter disappointment to him to find the sterility of a worldly-hearted pastor again settled down on the soil that he loved; but there was no earthly remedy, so he buried the grief, and said nothing. There was still a hope that light divine might possibly at no distant day break forth and shine from the church of the Alps; but the hope, so far as it rested on man, was a faint one. The aged patron had long ceased to manifest any interest in his tenantry, much, therefore, could not be looked for from his efforts on their behalf. So, as the young Captain afterwards said, 'There was but one loophole—"I gave myself unto prayer!"'

The day after the General and Miss North had returned from London, Mr. Beltimore, a gentleman residing on a neighbouring estate, called, as he often did, and joined the party at luncheon.

'I must say, General North, I felt myself particularly unfortunate in not seeing you before your visit to London, for I had it in my mind to ask a favour of you; in fact, to say the truth, I had intended to present a petition through you to Miss North, knowing her active benevolence; but somehow or other, I missed my opportunity.'

The General left Anastasia to respond, the conclusion of the address having been directed to her.

Anastasia at once inquired the nature of the favour that was to have been requested of her.

'It was a case of distress,' replied Mr. Beltimore; 'I think I have the letter by me, for I have always carried it in my pocket-book. It was particularly unfortunate that I lost both your help and the General's, for I fear I am hardly like to meet with another opportunity until I go up myself.'

Now Miss North did not at all dislike to be called upon to appear as the benevolent agent, and here, apparently, an opportunity had nearly been afforded her of coming forward in this character, so she remonstrated with Mr. Beltimore,—

'I think I remember telling you of the projected length of my visit, and that papa would come up for me in April.'

'Yes, yes; it was not for want of knowing; and I was always intending to mention the case to the General, but, somehow, one thing or another deprived me of the opportunity.'

By this time Mr. Beltimore had found the letter: it was as follows:—

'Dear Sir,—I flatter myself you will have some recollection of an early friend of your father's of the name of Morton. He visited at your father's residence in your childhood. I cannot tell whether you may even have heard of his death. I, his widow, was left by him well provided for: but the failure of a bank has swept every temporal comfort from me. I am in deep adversity. Could you, in any way, befriend me and my fatherless children? My boy is still requiring the instruction of a school; I could place him at an evening school not far from our lodging, if I could but find him employment in the day to pay for it—fourteen shillings a quarter is the charge. My daughter could take a situation as governess, but her health is failing under the pressure of poverty. I am, as I think you know, a native of another country, with no relatives here, and my husband was left the last of his family. Entreating your kind consideration of my case,

'I remain, yours most obediently,

'Florence Morton.'

The date of the letter was of nearly six weeks' standing

'I suppose you have had some communication with the widow since the receipt of her letter?' now inquired the General.

'No, indeed, I have not! for it seemed to me a case requiring seeing into, and so I waited for an opportunity.'

'But, my good sir, your opportunity lay before you in the very next post. A bank-note would have met the immediate necessity at once.'

'Yes, yes, General; but I cannot see my way clear always to fire off at a venture. I do like to take a good opportunity for doing the best that can be done.'

'Take my word for it then,' said the General, rising with flushed brow, 'the best that can be done is to set up a gravestone at once, and write upon it, "Here lieth a lost opportunity!"'

This was said in a tone bitter with indignation; and saying this, the General quitted the room. But Anastasia always thought it best to soften off, as much as possible, what she called her father's 'flash of the field;' and she entered at once into the subject with Mr. Beltimore, as to what he now thought might be done.

'I can assure you, if the General had not come down so fiercely upon me, I was going to inform him that I think of hastening my own visit to London, in order that I may secure an opportunity for inquiring into the circumstances of the case.'

'I would not wait for that, indeed,' replied Anastasia, whose best feelings were all flowing into the cause; 'I would not wait for that. I have a friend in London who will, I am sure, make every inquiry without loss of time. Will you allow me to enclose that letter to her, and empower her, if necessary, to give some small immediate relief, and to let us know what her view of the circumstances may be.

Mr. Beltimore consented, and Anastasia wrote off by the post of that day.

More than a fortnight passed by without any reply. Anastasia wrote again, somewhat resentfully, at her request not being responded to. Another week elapsed, after which she received the following answer :—

'My dear Anastasia,

'It is very evident you have but little idea of life in London, when you suppose that I could go off, at a day's notice, from the far west to the extreme east, in order to investigate a case of distress. I need not, I hope, assure you that my will was good; but literally I had not a moment at liberty during the interval between your first and second letters. Things crowd one upon another, until one is in danger of standing still from being at a loss which way to turn; in fact one is carried away in the stream; and as to supposing that one has time at personal disposal, it is the greatest fallacy in the world. When I received your admonitory letter I did rush off. I found the street with great difficulty, and the number in the street, but no such parties were known there. I even showed the letter, but the woman of the house assured me that no one in any way answering to the description was there. Of course I felt it useless to inquire any further. It was of the greatest importance that I should be home to a committee, so back I rushed as fast as horses' feet could carry me. We had the horrible misfortune of knocking down a child by the way; of course the poor little creature was just where it ought not to have been, —in the middle of the road. It did not seem much hurt,

for they do escape in a wonderful manner; but the hindrance just lost us the *quorum* at the committee, and the most important vote had to be postponed for a month. Not another moment to spare!

'Yours, in greatest haste,

'DIANA NICTITANS.'

'P. S.—You may comfort yourself that the case is one of the countless impositions which in the present day inundate the public. I could give you instances without number, but time forbids more than the assurance of the fact to satisfy your mind.'

Anastasia thought the fact most satisfactorily ascertained; but the General did not view it in the same light: he desired her to give him the widow's letter. Captain North was expected to arrive in London on the next day; his father had already written to welcome him, but he would write again, and ask him to investigate the case.

Anastasia in vain suggested that it must be useless, because the fact that there was no one answering to the address was already ascertained—Harry could do no more than her friend had done. Her father replied that he never trusted to any one who did things in a hurry; to "make haste slowly" was very possible, but the perturbation of *hurry* had no claim to be trusted. He should write to Harry,—if he announced the case an imposition, he then should be convinced that such was the fact.

'There is no reasoning against partiality!' exclaimed Anastasia, when she had quitted the room.

The General wrote, enclosing the widow's letter,—

'My dear Boy,

'Give an hour or two to see into this case before you leave London. There has been delay in the party to whom it was addressed, and, I fear, it may be too late.

'Your affectionate father,

'H. North.'

In the course of a few days the following letter arrived,—

'My dear Father,

* * * * * * *

'I dashed into your business at once, for I thought the old date of the letter made the affair somewhat pressing. I had seen horrors enough abroad, but really these cold-blooded tragedies are worse! How in the world could such a letter be suffered to lie by so long? However, I suppose you had inquired and been balked; for the lodging-house woman said she had been asked for them before, and knew no such parties. "How long have you been here?" I asked. "The best part of a month," she answered. And the letter was almost three months old! so I spent no more words with her; but reconnoitred the place, and soon spied out a baker's shop. Now, thought I, if they were ever here, the chances are that it was there they had bread; so in I turned, and asked after them. It was pretty much all the good woman could do to tell me, and I to hear! The long and short of it was just this,—A poor widow used to come to her week after week for bread, and always brought her money with her; she

never said a word more than to ask for her bread; paid for it and took it away. At last she ceased to come for some time, and when she appeared again she was almost like a corpse! The shopkeeper questioned her; she said she had been at death's door, but she had now sold the last garment that could be parted with, and was come for bread once more. She had worked day and night until her illness came on, and her daughter was then sinking away. The shopwoman tells her husband, and he goes off to some wholesale warehouse not far distant, and tells the lads there, and they all club together and put no less than thirty shillings into the baker's hand the next day for the widow. God's blessing rest on the brave fellows and the worthy baker, who carried his petition into the midst of them in trust of their charity! It gave such comfort as sympathy and food can give the dying; but it was too late to save—the girl and her mother rest together! The boy enlisted as a soldier, glad enough, no doubt, to find a vent for bitter feeling in authorised strife with his fellows. Who could have left such an appeal as that letter contained unanswered for a day, even if it had come from an enemy? In a week I hope to be with you; but I have a few things to settle still, which makes the exact time rather uncertain. Love to my mother, and to all.

'Your most affectionate son,

'HARRY NORTH.'

CHAPTER VI.

The return of spring again told on Leonore's vigour; she hung languidly over her lesson-books, and took a perceptibly lessened interest in everything. But though her cheek had lost its colour, and her eye its life, she was not thin in figure as before, and therefore her want of steady application was attributed to dissipation of mind at the expectation of her brother's return, rather than to any natural inability. The poor child was often in disgrace, and her lesson-books blotted with tears.

At set of sun, on the 20th of May, Harry North crossed the threshold of his home; and with his coming a change seemed to pass over all things, a vigour of life, beyond what had been there before. It might be all fancy that the birds in their songs, and the breeze fanning the young leaves of the trees, seemed all to sing out and say, 'Welcome home, Harry North! Welcome home, this bright May!' This might be all fancy, but it was certain that Hugo, the blood-hound, bayed three times as often, and quite in a different key; it was certain that the labourers had twice as much life, as they worked, always on the lookout for a sight of the young gallant gentleman home from the wars; it was certain

that good old Benson, the butler, seemed suddenly to have shaken the weight of ten years from his solid figure; and every one in the household shared the brightening contagion. The family feeling rose high. Little Leonore bent over her tasks day by day with a determination to conquer them, and get herself free, that succeeded for a few days; but the tired feeling came back worse than before, and the holidays were still lying some weeks in the distance. General North saw the lowered tone of the child, and proposed that she should be granted her release from the schoolroom a few weeks earlier than the canonical time, to celebrate her brother's return; but Mrs. North thought the mental and moral discipline good, of continued application to lessons until the set time of release; so the tired child laboured heavily on.

Many a kind, anxious glance fell from the brother's eyes on the spiritless aspect of his little sister. Captain North was not only a classical and Oriental scholar, but a practical man also; he alone, of all, inherited his mother's intellectual tastes, combined with his father's powers of observation and discernment. Let him be where he would, he seemed always to win the ascendant, not by *crossing*, but by *winning*, the wills of all others. The root of this universal success, no doubt was, that every one trusted him, and felt themselves safe, to the last scruple, with his kind true heart; and every one had a secret feeling of personal elevation in yielding to the demands of his frank, generous nature. He was a being of transparent sunlight; and those whom he opposed, if capa-

ble of kindly feeling, were sure to be in a brighter humour when conquered by him, than before the antagonism began. Such bright influence on earth would not be so rare as it is, if the hearts of the young were as ceaselessly trained in the free exercise of unselfish feeling, as their minds are in personal acquirement. School, college, and the camp, had all been compelled to yield up their best offerings to Harry North's bright demand; and each in return had received the glowing reflection of the light so concentrated. His home was the haunt of his affections on earth; but the young soldier had learned that divinest lore whose birthplace is celestial — that lore which secures, as far as the highest influence can, the right judgment of the will; he had learned it not at the knee of his mother, nor from the lips of his sire, but in the rough nursery of the camp and the battle-field.

'Where is my little sister?' asked the Captain, with a secret misgiving, as he missed Leonore and Miss Keymer one evening from the drawing-room, soon after his return to his home. Mrs. North replied, 'I conclude Leonore has not been attentive at her lessons. Miss Keymer complains that she has been determinately idle the last few weeks; and idleness is as destructive to character as to education!'

'My dear mother, I should say both character and education are often greatly the worse for want of a little authorised idleness—a little more of free release and unbending when required, and not only at calculated seasons. Where is my little sister?'

Antonia looked up, and the long story written in her eyes was read by the soldier at a glance.

'I have fought for my Queen, my country, and my home, and I am not going to be cheated without knowing why!'

This sentence, uttered in his own tone of bright determination, was finished by the Captain, as he shut the drawing-room door after him; then, vaulting up-stairs, he knocked very decidedly at the door of the schoolroom, and opened it without waiting a response. 'Good evening, Miss Keymer!'

Miss Keymer sat on her stool at the schoolroom table, looking unusually worn out, and built up in resolution; poor little Leonore was seated opposite. She looked round at the sound of her brother, but did not venture a word.

'I am sorry, Captain North, that I cannot invite you this evening to my schoolroom!'

'I am quite aware that you cannot, Miss Keymer, and therefore I am sure that you will pardon me for coming uninvited!'

'Not this evening, Captain North; Leonore is in disgrace for inattention, and I am quite determined that her lesson shall be repeated perfectly, before she has a single indulgence!'

'So am I, Miss Keymer, and for that very reason I am come!' So saying, the Captain lifted Leonore in her high-backed chair, a little out of the direct line of Miss Keymer's displeased eye, and seated himself at her side, directly opposite to Miss Keymer.

'I must request you, Captain North, to leave Leonore to her lesson alone; she is perfectly capable of learning it! she has done exactly the same lesson every day this week with

case, and I am not going to allow her any help as an encouragement to idleness!'

'Now, good Miss Keymer, pardon your old pupil just home from the wars! I only want to learn this easy lesson too. If you could but have seen how many a poor young fellow, whose home I never saw, but because he was not standing his ground, I have given him a look or a word, and seen him cheer on to the strife; and now, my own little sister, that I have shed a soldier's tear for, on the eve of the battle-day, and yet when she is down I must not share her fate! I couldn't stand it, Miss Keymer! nor you neither, if you have to think of it when I am far away again, and, it may be, laid low in a soldier's wild grave!'

Miss Keymer's aspect relented, and the Captain began: 'Now, Leonore, tell me all we must learn, every word!'

Leonore threw her arms round her brother's neck, with a clinging clasp that almost unnerved him; but he kept his perfect composure. 'No, only one arm, just round my neck! as we have but one book, because we are in school now! You must let me have the book, because I have not had it yet, and I will read it aloud that we may both learn it together. What! is this all? I shall soon manage this.'

Captain North read the lesson once or twice, then shutting the book, began to try and repeat; he made several mistakes, and such peculiarly odd ones that Leonore laughed, and a smile lightened Miss Keymer's tired countenance; but as the soldier's eyes were fast shut, in his extreme attention to the task, he did not see what was passing. At each mis-

take that he made Leonore set him right from her own recollection; and as each time of repeating he remembered less than the former, it soon became evident, from the assistance rendered by Leonore, that the unexpected stimulant of her brother at her side had freshened her tired powers into action again. At length the Captain said, 'It seems to me you have the best chance still! Let me try that way of learning; you say it, and see how far I can set you right!'

Leonore tried right cheerfully, but the Captain was still so much at fault, that Leonore had to recollect and fill up her own mistakes herself, which she soon did entirely.

'I think, Miss Keymer, that Leonore has now said her lesson every word; and I know you will excuse me a few blunders.'

Miss Keymer had resumed her grave looks.

'Leonore can learn for you, I perceive. I knew very well she could do it if she chose.'

'O Miss Keymer, you really shall go through just one campaign with me, for old-acquaintance sake, that you may see what a Captain's "Hurra, my lads! Victory and Home!" will do for the poor tired boys.'

The young Captain shouted his war-cry as if on the battle-field; and the burst of that sonorous voice which had sent the last thrill through many a brave heart, before it gave its final throb to its sovereign and its country, electrified Leonore, and stirred Miss Keymer's kind heart to its depths. 'Now we may all go down together,' added the Captain. But Leonore whispered, 'No, Harry, I must not go down to-night, because I did not learn my lesson before.'

'Then neither must I. Miss Keymer, must I not go down again to-night?' asked the Captain.

'I will excuse Leonore at your request, Captain North; but, indeed, another evening I shall be obliged to lock my schoolroom door if Leonore is so perverse any more.'

'No, indeed, Miss Keymer, that might be a personal danger to me; for being pledged to my little sister's fate, I should be obliged to bring up my artillery to bear; and, you see, I might be held answerable for the consequences; but, indeed, Leonore will never be idle any more. So now we are only waiting for you.'

'You must excuse me, I am much too fatigued.'

'Not a step without you, Miss Keymer. What! deny me the first laurels of home, and send me down shorn of all glory in success? You could not, Miss Keymer. Indeed, I have often helped a poor fellow to win when I have been ready myself to drop from fatigue; the very spirit of the act gave me strength; and you know, Miss Keymer, as well as I do, that you can always fetch up spirit for a kindness. I will sit here on the banisters until both you and Leonore have had time to take a short nap for refreshment, and I will sing over an old song to make the time pass without weariness; but not one stair will I descend until you descend with me.'

The Captain's song:

'The red rose is pale as the lily to-night!
O, where is the blush that arrayed her at dawn?
She unfolded in beauty, then swept by a blight,
And she faded to paleness ere faded the morn.

Alas, for the red rose! the first breeze of day
Bore her opening fragrance abroad on its wings;
But now, faded and scentless, she droops on the spray;
'Tis her requiem to-night that the nightingale sings.

Sigh for the red rose! had the blight not passed by
She had drunk all night long of the heavenly dew,
And the first breeze of dawn would have wakened her eye,
All her beauty and fragrance unfolding to view.'

Leonore reappeared quickly in her clean white frock for the evening; and Miss Keymer soon followed, refreshed by the change of feeling and slight preparation for the drawing-room. Leonore received her with a warm, confiding embrace, to which she stooped as kindly as if all had been peace through the day; and the three descended in perfect harmony together.

Miss Keymer had felt the greater disappointment in Leonore's premature falling off in her lessons, because, through the whole periods of application, since the previous spring, Leonore had entered into her schoolroom pursuits with far more interest and intelligence than ever before. It seemed not to be obvious that the mental expenditure having been greater, it accounted for an earlier necessity for rest and relaxation. The anxious instructress was disappointed, and the child pressed the more heavily as her powers of attention gave way, both of which evils might have been avoided by a little more unbiassed exercise of that high moral qualification, Common Sense! But all such mistakes in Miss Keymer were constantly mitigated by her ready response to counteracting influences. She did not

build up herself in any bulwark of selfishness or pride, and therefore did not incur the responsibility of fencing in her unavoidable mistakes from the counteracting influence of those kindly agencies, which circulate in the moral world, no less than in the material. Miss Keymer never incurred this serious responsibility; she was always ready to yield to whatever made a legitimate appeal to the kind true feelings of her heart. Tired, and a little cross, she sometimes was, and no wonder that she was so; but she never legalised her crossness by calling it displeasure, she perfectly distinguished, and observed the distinction. She knew that displeasure at a fault was a feeling to be entirely yielded up when atonement was made, or forgiveness bestowed; and the natural kindness of her disposition made her glad to rise to the constant observance of this equitable rule. In this way she acquired a power of at once restoring harmony between her own spirit and her pupils; and the young heart's elasticity was constantly saved from a moral over-pressure which could only have tended to render it insensible, or disposed it to become a prey to reserve and melancholy brooding. And when, as in the present instance, Miss Keymer laboured under a mistake, then her happy readiness to yield to the kindly efforts of others came in to the rescue. Had Miss Keymer indulged in either selfishness or pride, neither of these bright attractions could have adorned and enriched her personal character and relative influence.

A silent expression of pleasure beamed from every face on the three as they entered the drawing-room, from every

face except Anastasia's! Anastasia had guessed the campaign, she had not ventured to enter the lists from fear of her father's displeasure, but she looked upon her brother's invasion of the schoolroom as most unwarrantable. And now she watched for an opportunity of sending one useful hailstone in the sunbeam that had, so unexpectedly, broken out on the child. When Leonore, in the course of the evening, passed near her chair, Anastasia detained her to say, 'Remember, this is the last time that Harry will be allowed to interfere!' Miss North believed that it was a principle of justice, which impelled her to give this passing admonition.

O Anastasia! can you not discover that your *principles of justice* are a 'coarse fabric,' indeed, beside the exquisite texture of the enactments enjoined by our Father in Heaven between one human heart and another? Dig about the roots of this justice of yours, water it freely with pure unselfish love, then it will gradually acquire a delicacy and tenderness in its firm fibres, of which you as yet have gained no conception!

With this one exception the evening proved bright and refreshing to all, and to none more than to Miss Keymer, for the sense of yielding to kindly impulses is in itself a refreshment, and she had met with more than usual courtesy in the family circle. The Captain seemed most anxious to make the evening agreeable to her; and very soon Antonia had found a seat at her side, and was kindling her into interest on some facts of natural history in which she had

been delighting that day. The General guessed that Leonore and Miss Keymer were trophies of a field well fought, and he beamed forth on all in proportionable satisfaction and kindness. Mrs. North was particularly gracious; and Clara smiled on Leonore; so that, finally, the child went happy to her slumbers. And when Miss Keymer retired, the Captain opened the door for her, saying, 'A thousand thanks for your goodness this evening.' Miss Keymer was satisfied and glad. The night brought refreshment, and in the morning the governess and her little pupil met again, with no sense of disturbance or oppression upon them; both were bright, as if life were beginning afresh with the day; every hope, desire, and effort, had full opportunity to spring, bud, and blossom anew.

'Buckle too, bravely, this one day more!' the Captain whispered to his little sister after breakfast. 'I have a fine scheme in my head, but don't give it one corner in yours. Work on in real earnest, and, cost what it will, be sure you are in the drawing-room to-day when we come in after dinner.' Leonore promised, and bent all her energies to her tasks, not without success, though perhaps she could hardly have gone through another day of like efforts with like results.

Captain North was not at the luncheon-table, no one had seen him since breakfast. The dinner hour arrived, but he was not there. 'Is Captain North out?' inquired the General of Benson, as they sat down to table.

'I don't know, sir.'

'Don't know; but I choose to know! I have heard nothing but "don't know" all day! send off to the stables directly.'

A footman ran, and brought back word that Captain North had ordered his horse at ten o'clock, and had not been home since.

The dinner was a very spiritless hour that day, having lost—and no one knew why—the animated voice so lately added to its circle. The General brightened on entering the drawing-room, at sight of Antonia and Leonore. Antonia, now sixteen years of age, would have been promoted to the late dinner, had it not been for her own wish still to drink tea with Leonore and Miss Keymer, who were both not a little glad of the bright addition at their early repast.

'Where is your Captain, Leonore?' asked her papa.

'I don't know, papa.'

'Don't know! why the whole house is infected with "don't know." I will forbid that answer on a penalty, if I hear it again.'

Then entered Benson. 'Captain North asks for Miss Leonore at the hall-door.'

There was an ill-concealed expression of most heartfelt satisfaction in good old Benson's face, which awakened some general curiosity and interest, and the shout that in a moment followed from Leonore drew the whole assembled family, except Mrs. North, to the hall.

There sat the Captain, fresh mounted on Blenheim, and he held, by a leading rein, a little round dappled gray pony, all fitted with side-saddle and bridle! At sight of the assembled family the Captain took off his hat with three cheers of success, which the General returned with a most

hearty 'Well done, my brave boy!' Antonia ran back to the drawing-room, exclaiming, 'O thank you, thank you, aunt, for granting me my long-promised wish! What a beauty it is!'

'My dear, I don't know what you mean? it must be some scheme of Harry's, not mine.'

So Antonia ran back to the hall to admire the gray pony again.

Meanwhile the Captain shouted, 'Come, Leonore! here I am, after riding all day to hunt, capture, or beg a pony for you, and I have got this perfect lamb at last: upon trial, with offer of purchase. Come along, just as you are, only get on your hat, not a moment to lose.'

Captain North, it may be observed, often shouted 'not a moment to *lose*,' but no one had ever heard him say 'not a moment to *spare*.'

Leonore held back in doubt, and went to the drawing-room to ask her mamma; but Antonia flew off for the hat, and the shawl—which Mrs. North tied fast round the little girl; almost before she knew what had happened, she was upon the pony, and off started Blenheim and the dapple gray by his side, leaving all the party to consider the propriety at leisure.

Antonia was wild with joy at this most unexpected event: not one knew, half so well as her young heart of sympathy, how poor little Leonore needed some freshening of Nature; and this of all seemed to her most delightful. The General was magnanimously silent. Mrs. North only remarked that

she hoped Leonore had enough on to keep her from taking any chill in such exercise.

'O yes, mamma,' responded Clara, 'the air at this open window is as soft and warm as July.'

Kind Miss Keymer kept very unsettled from fear of an accident. 'The child so unused to anything of the sort; and how could they be sure, in one day, that the pony was safe?' Miss North only wished that Harry would make a few more inquiries before he dashed at things in his wild way, as if everything must give in to his fancy of the moment.

All this while the little Leonore rode bravely on the fat dapple gray, by the side of her brother. Old Blenheim well knew his rider, and was for showing off a little at first, but finding it did not suit the occasion, and having a strong fancy for imitation, he kept his eye turned on the small dapple gray, and quickly succeeded in copying his miniature paces to perfection; so the ride was most perfectly delightful; on through one avenue after another with the green leaves gleaming gold, and the birds ceasing their songs to look down in interest and approval, as the brother and his little sister passed below.

The roses soon glowed on Leonore's pale cheeks, and her blue eyes looked up in such gladness and love to her brother, that a thought of the camp and the battle-field, where he soon again might be parted from all whom he held most dear on earth, rushed faint, for a moment, through the heart of the soldier.

'Tired yet, little sister?'

'O no, we won't go home yet; do let us stay out a long time!'

So they left the shady avenues and rambled over the common; there the fresh evening breeze bore health on its wings, and not until the first star had lighted its lamp did they return to the home.

Leonore's tumbled white frock was changed for another, and when she again appeared in the circle, the life that had passed through the spirit of the little girl was most evident, her comparative listlessness was freshened into animation and vigour.

The following morning Captain North detained Leonore in the breakfast-room, from which only Miss Keymer was gone, and desired her, in a low voice universally audible, to take his best respects to Miss Keymer, and say, that having himself gone without a dinner the day before for the sake of a ride with his little sister, he should feel extremely obliged if Miss Keymer would, for that day, allow Leonore to go without a lesson in algebra, that she might have an earlier ride with him.

'O Harry! you know I don't learn algebra.'

'Well then altimetry! I think perhaps that might be spared for to-day!'

'O Harry! how can you talk so? I don't know what altimetry is.'

'Indeed, I was not aware. Then ask if the most abstruse of all the sciences you do learn may be excused just for to-day?'

'O Harry! I cannot take such messages.'

'What is your Captain bribing you to try at, my little fishwoman?' asked the General.

'It is impossible, sir,' replied the Captain, 'to get up a suitable message to Miss Keymer between us, the subject is quite beyond me.'

But Antonia had caught the first glimpse of the purposed attempt, and running off in search of Miss Keymer, returned at this moment with the full permission for any time in the day that Mrs. North approved. Mrs. North no longer objected. The victory was won from that hour. The rejoicing and invigorating ride of each day on the pony, which was soon made by her father's gift her own, with the amount of application by this means reduced, was all the aid that the little Leonore wanted to carry her on bravely and brightly through the few weeks that still remained until the summer holidays. And when they came, she lived an unfettered life, with her brother and Antonia, which restored the delicate balance once more to the mental and moral powers of her nature.

The resources at command in Leonore's home were those of affluence, but the refreshment of variety has been provided by God to meet the varying measure of requirement for all; it is only the violating His providential arrangements, which involves the condemnation of any to the debasement of ceaseless monotony and toil. The healthful, happy child of the labouring peasant, may drink as ceaselessly of the refreshment of variety, as the child of the Peer, or the Monarch, "He hath made everything beautiful in His time; also He hath set the world in their heart; so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end."

CHAPTER VII.

One day, in this bright summer, Captain North, wandering along the river's brink, looked up, and saw Antonia seated beneath the cool shadow of the trees above. He sprang up the bank, and lying down on the mossy slope near her rustic seat, reposed in the shade.

'Were you reading?' he asked, as he glanced at the book on her knee.

'No, I was hardly doing more than enjoying the beauty around.'

'What a paradise it is!' said the soldier, 'but alas! I always see the vision of Paradise lost—the angel with the fiery sword guarding the Tree of Life! I can never discover any nearer approach to that Tree; mine seems to be a home in Paradise without the one only blessing that can make Paradise eternal!'

'There may be many nearer approaches,' Antonia replied, 'unseen, except by Heaven!'

'Yes, I know there may be; God grant it in my home!' the soldier said fervently, and then added, 'I am sure my little Leonore has sheathed in her heart a ray from the skies; it is always gleaming out in her life, and that ray

was caught in companionship with you! But my father—oh, no words can describe what it is not to see his noble spirit yet taking one step in the narrow pathway leading to life everlasting!'

Antonia was silent, and the soldier soon continued: 'Sometimes I feel as if I must try something desperate; I am continually speaking out for myself, and my father bears it so generously, as if he remembered that I have the right of a freeman! But I know this very feeling would make him resent it the more if he thought that I took upon myself to question and judge for him; and yet to see him nearing that tremendous precipice of Death, and not to have a hope that he has entered into covenant with "Him who alone can save him from falling," is more than I know how to contemplate!'

Antonia was still silent, and Captain North went on:—'If my father were always standing on guard, as most people are, it would be quite a different thing to turn the point home; but he is so open, so noble, and has no notion of holding up a shield away from the battle-field, that one would seem stamped a coward for striking!'

'But,' said Antonia, 'must it not be the cowardly feeling that alone can make the coward?'

'Yes; perhaps it is only the want of sufficient courage to venture what might *look* like a cowardly act, that lies at the root of it all, and yet it is hard to break the ice and plunge in!'

'But not hard when once it is done!' replied Antonia.

It was a simple answer, but the young warrior looked up to the speaker; there seemed to be in the depths of that simple reply, the fact of a conflict he had shrunk from as yet, of a struggle beyond any his life of warfare had known. He asked instantly, 'Then, Antonia, you have broken it?'

'Yes,' she replied, with strongly repressed emotion, 'I did venture it!' Then looking down on the hero at her feet, she added emphatically, 'But it closed up again, and I might not try any more!'

'That is nothing to the point!' he exclaimed, as he sprang up, 'you have entered on the conflict which I, as a coward, have passed by; but I turn to it now, recalled by your voice! Farewell.' And then looking back, he added, 'O, stay here with Heaven, and make intercession for my father and me!'

Scarcely had Captain North disappeared among the trees, than Antonia saw him returning again. 'It is no use,' he said earnestly. 'I feel all my own efforts are vain; the clasps of the heavenly armour will not bind beneath the pressure of such trembling fingers as mine. I must kneel at the feet of the Eternal, and ask Him to gird it on for the struggle. Will you, Antonia, ask it with me?'

In that lonely glade, long consecrated by Antonia to communion with Heaven, they knelt, while the soldier, whose sanctuary had more often been the temple of Nature than the edifice of Art, poured forth his supplication to Heaven. The fire of his spirit—a fit impetus for the wrestling against flesh and blood, but no auxiliary for the fight

whose banner is the cross, and whose victory is by faith—calmed itself in the presence of that might whose strength is Omnipotence. He left the glade, determined that, if possible, the sun of that day should not set until he had presented some petition to his father, which might lead in his home to the knowledge which is life eternal.

That afternoon the son found his father, as he usually did, reposing in his arm-chair in the study after writing his letters. The afternoon shade of that room made it a delightful seclusion; through its open glass doors you looked on sunshine gleaming on green slopes and foliage, while yourself reposing in shade. The son felt more deeply than ever the welcome that always beamed on his presence. O, it was hard to darken it all by a word, immeasurably harder than to plunge in the breach, though with all but a certainty that the next step would be fatal! But more than duty, filial devotion required it. He presently said, 'I have often longed to tell you, father, what I have tried at in my Company. I have read from the Bible, whenever it was possible, night and morning in my tent; some of the men have come in whenever they could, and sometimes I have had one or two young officers with me. I could not express the effect it seemed to have; it has made me long to ask you to have morning and evening prayers in our home!'

Alas! THE BIBLE was still a subject on which the General could not meet an appeal. Rising instantly in anger, he replied, 'If you had had the patience to wait your next return, sir, you would probably have found yourself as much

master here as in your tent—your old father cleared out of the way, and his regulations might have been swept after him by your emendations, without any opposition from him!'

'O, father! call back those words, or their weight will lay me low in the next field I fight. A soldier's grave will shield me for ever from the sight of my home bereft of my father!'

The father looked down on his son; pride, impatience, and anger, had all broken loose on the head bowed in filial entreaty before him; and when, instead of resentment's quick sense of injustice, he saw only the depth of the wound he had inflicted, he felt in a moment the wrong he had done; and steadying himself by laying his hand on the shoulder of his son, he said, in a tone of deepest feeling, 'Forgive me, my boy! I do recall them, I do!' Then standing erect, he groaned forth, 'O Harry! you shall never see the battle-field again, or I shall go to my grave with the thought like a dagger through my heart—my demon of passion slew my son! You shall keep the laurels you have won, unwatered by the tears of a broken-hearted home! Do not speak to me now, but send your mother to me here!' The son went to find his mother, and met her on the terrace.

'My father asks for you, mother, in the library.' His mother hastened in. Harry North only added, 'I shall be in my own room;' and left her.

Within an hour he was sent for; and his first anxious glance showed him how deeply his mother had shared in the conflict of feeling. He little knew at that moment that her confession had been fuller than his own, that, appealed to

by his father, she had found the long wanting power of expression, and the feelings that had flowed into her soul, silently and alone, from the page of inspiration, had in this unlooked-for moment been poured by her into the heart of the husband of her youth. But the son, as yet, knew not that such feelings existed in the breast of his mother. His father spoke: 'Harry, you, no less than your father and your uncle, have met the fiercest onset of danger and death in the service of your country. Are you willing now to give up your commission, at the wish of your parents, that foreign war may not darken the light of your home?'

For a moment the young soldier was staggered, as there rose up instantly before him the associations and ties of the camp and the field, the care of his men, the laurels bravely won, with near hopes of higher promotion, and the interest of varied travel, adventure, and discovery. All these lay as attractions in the distant horizon; while above him a dark cloud had gathered,—he stood before his parents with the persuasion that his effort to bring his home into communion with Heaven was lost and buried in bitter feelings, which he could never venture to awaken again; and the immediate result of which was this appeal from his father to give up the profession, in which his father had before seen him advancing with so much pride and pleasure. It was a struggle of feeling for the moment, only second to that which had cost him so much an hour before; but a moment weighed all, and he answered, without question or reserve, 'If it be the will of my parents, I am willing.'

His mother laid her hand in his, but turned her face away. Then his father silently opened a closet, lifted from its shelf a large Bible, and placed it in the hand of his son. 'Take this, my boy,' he said; 'thrice to-day you have proved the reality of the principles you profess: be the chaplain of your home, and in secret pray for me—for our own strength is hopeless in the war with ourselves!' Then, instantly ringing the bell, he gave the household order for attendance at morning and evening prayer; and unable to bear more he drew his wife's arm within his own, and taking his son's arm, they strolled on the secluded lawn before the library window until the dinner-bell called them in, calmed in spirit, and refreshed beneath the blessing of Heaven, and the cool evening breeze.

It was difficult to the parents and the son to rally to general conversation at the dinner-table; but Harry North made an effort so happily directed as to draw out his sister Anastasia into lengthened description, which diverted her scrutiny from her parents for the time, and relieved them from the pressure of either conversation or silence. As soon as the ladies left the room the father took his son's arm, and they followed to the drawing-room. 'Shall we sit under the trees?' said Harry North, as he saw the evening breeze waving their branches. His parents assented. Neither Antonia nor Leonore were in the room, but Clara accompanied them. Harry North looked out for his little sister, who presently appeared at the drawing-room window. At sight of her parents and her brother on the

lawn she set off at full speed, and was soon in the midst. She gave life to the scene, and even the General rallied a little. At length her brother made a venture, Leonore was seated on his knee, and he whispered, 'Shall I tell you a secret?'

'O, do, Harry!'

'Your Captain is not going to the wars any more.'

'O Harry! O papa!' said the child, with an almost scream of delight; and the full tide of her joy, with Clara's affectionate pleasure, kindled a life in the scene on which it solaced both parents to look, though the demands of the day had been too deep for much expression from them.

At length Leonore said, 'I will just run and look for Antonia.'

'No, no,' said her brother; 'you stay here with papa and mamma, and then you can tell all the people as they come one by one.'

Harry North then withdrew, not sorry to escape before his elder sister joined the circle, not being equally sure of the tone she would take; for Anastasia always liked to be one of the first to know everything: she never liked what she called "a want of confidence;" in other words, she had pride enough to feel hurt if others were informed of a fact before it was communicated to her, not having imagination sufficient to enable her to conjecture why such a thing might naturally occur, or have appeared best at the time. When Anastasia appeared, Leonore ran forward to tell her; but the fact was too astounding to be responded to until Mrs.

North had taken up the subject, during which the General rose, and strolled away, as he generally did at such conferences, and Leonore went with him, and Clara began to collect her unusually dissipated thoughts, in order to get up a little trigonometry that evening.

Harry North made his way to the glade, where his morning petition had been offered, there to pour forth his fervent thanksgiving; and there he hoped he might again find Antonia to tell her of the wonderful work of that day. She was there, and his spirits regained their tone in breathing forth the burden of feeling to one who could comprehend and uphold. As he sat calmly there all Nature around and above seemed full of quiet rest; the hush of peace breathed everywhere. Was Nature's stillness more than it was wont to be? No; but he had passed through wrestlings of spirit deep and strong, that made the first given sense of perfect calm within and around him intense. The sun was setting, and his long day's work was done, the victory won, the strife all hushed in love; and to his vision now the hope of immortality had dawned on the bright paradise around—the Angel, with the fiery sword, seemed gone from Life's fair Tree; around it he saw his home's bright band assembling at morning and at evening, and his hand raised to gather for them its leaves of healing. But the shadows fell, he hastened back by the nearer and wilder way, while Antonia took her own path to the house.

Antonia swelled the tide of rejoicing; the General was

cheered by the brightness before him; both parents looked in silent feeling on those around them.

As the evening advanced a shout was suddenly heard, followed by a long, loud cheer. All listened, the cheer rose again, and Captain North went out to the hall-door. But the moment he had opened it, and stood visible in the light of the hall-lamp, from a hundred voices rose a loud, joyous shout, 'Cheer, cheer, for the Captain!' and the peasants' tones of gladness pealed forth on the night. The continued cheering brought out the whole family. From the top of a huge oak-tree a stentorian voice sent forth again the demand, 'Cheer, cheer, for the Captain!' and again it rang out from the assembly below. How the joyous crowd had come there was the question; it was soon discovered that they had heard, in some way or other, that the young Squire was returning no more to the wars. It was no passing compliment they had come there to render; the English peasant lends not his strong voice to such service; you must touch his heart if you would awaken his spirit-stirring shout, and the young soldier was the loved of all hearts: often had his setting out for the wars dimmed the eyes of the villagers, and the blessing of the poor had covered his head in the day of battle, and now that he was going no more "it was meet they should be glad and rejoice." It was long before speaking was possible. At length the villagers paused to take breath, and the young soldier on the top of the stone flight of steps waved his hand to ask silence, and spoke, 'Ten thousand thanks to each one of you all, my good friends! Why, you have taken my

sword from me to-night, with a hundred times more of what I call heart-music than ever I had when I girded it on. Next to my home, it is for your sake I rejoice to lay it down, that I may be always at hand to carry out my father's good wishes for you. May God, of His mercy, give us peace in our time, peace in our homes, and peace in our hearts, for the love of His only Son, who took the battle-field alone, and gave up His life to win the peace of God for us! Now let me lead you off in a cheer, "Three cheers for the cottage-homes of England!—Peace, freedom, and blessing, on the cottage-homes of England!"' Loud and long rose the cheer on hill, forest, and river. Then a murmur of voices broke forth from the crowd, 'The Master! the General! the Squire!' The man on the oak-tree caught up the sound, and shouted, 'Three cheers for the Squire, General North!' and again swelled the chorus, and died on the night air away. The General was too deeply moved by the sight and the sound of all his tenantry rejoicing, to make any response, so the Captain spoke again, 'My father thanks you by me, and gives the last cheer for our Queen.' High pealed the loud shout from the man on the tree, from the yeomen, the labourers, the lads, and the household servants; General North's loyal heart echoed the strains—his voice the last that was borne by the night-breeze along the murmuring river to the wood's deepest glade. Then the Captain descended the steps, and shook hands with them all—a soldier's hearty grasp, and the man hastened down from the tree not to miss the salute; and some of the lads, growing bold in the darkness, cried

out as they left, 'We shall show up more cheers for you yet!' And so they all departed, and the family returned to the retirement within.

It seemed as if on that day the waves of passionate feeling were to roll over the heart of the soldier without intermission, until the slumber of night calmed his soul into rest. Yet it was well that this last had been added, for none but the soldier can know what it is for the last time to ungird his sword! It is not as a weapon of destruction that he clings to it, and would yield his life up rather than it, but because he girded it on to guard the steps of the Throne, and the thresholds of the homes of his Country; and when he lays it down, it seems to him as if, for the first time, he consented to fall back in the rear, and take his place among the guarded, instead of the guardians of his land. And yet it is only so in *seeming*, for truly it is not alone the swords flashing from their sheaths that are a country's defence and exaltation; but the noble spirits no less that direct her counsels with wisdom and judgment, the generous hearts that keep her life-blood in healthful, free circulation, and the holy hands raised in supplication to Heaven for the blessing and the shield of the Lord God of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel.

In the drawing-room conjecture arose as to how the tidings could possibly have circulated so soon, and Leonore said, 'I kept the secret indeed! only Harry told me I was to stay in the garden and tell the people one by one as they came; and as soon as Harry was gone, Benson came with a

message to papa, so I just ran back after Benson and told him; but, indeed, I kept the secret, for I did not tell any one else!' So this gave the clue to unravel the mystery.

And now the evening hours closed with prayer, for the first time since that mansion had been reared. The General stepped up to his son and said, 'My boy, I have no book of family prayers.'

'Never mind that, father, I can do without!' and the family entered the dining-room where the servants stood up in long rows. General North, standing for a moment at the table, said to his household, 'My son has undertaken this office for your good, and the good of each one of us I trust, I desire therefore that no unnecessary excuse be ever made for absence. May God grant us His Blessing!' He then sat down by Mrs. North, the son near with that large Bible before him. The soldier-son of that house opened the Gospel of St. Luke, and read of that Centurion whose servant was dear unto him, and who sent beseeching Jesus that He would come and heal his servant's sickness; who yet, when Jesus went, thought himself unworthy that He should enter under his roof,—unworthy himself to go unto Him, but sent to Jesus again, beseeching him to speak but the word and that word would bring healing. "And Jesus marvelled and said to the people that followed, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And they that had been sent, returning, found the servant whole that had been sick."

The comprehensiveness of the brief narrative, the mutual relation of the persons of whom it told, with the beautiful

touches of character and feeling, made it tell on that evening with peculiar effect. Then followed the prayer. But when a son offers up the first family orisons by which a household is consecrated to God, that petition must be sacred to the offerers, the attendant angels, and the ear of the Eternal.

While the family were preparing for rest, a murmur of voices, now heard from afar, broke again on the ear. On looking from the windows bright bonfires were seen on the hills of the "Alps," glowing red against the azure skies of night and the silvery light of the stars. The soldier watched until their last gleam died away. The deep well-springs of feeling on that day had rushed again and again with torrent force through his soul; but One had been near who can say to the wild waves of feeling, "Peace, be still, it is I!" The soldier had heard and was calm. No day can be lived over twice, and there are some days which add years, rather than hours, to the experience, the strength, and the depth of a lifetime.

CHAPTER VIII.

The gamekeeper and his wife had now perfected themselves in the art of reading. Antonia often paid a brightening visit to their cottage, and shared its joys and sorrows, but the reading-lessons were not needed now. There rose within her soul a longing for some other cottage-home on which to shed a beam of added light and love; but none seemed in her way.

It was in the early spring of this same year, when the winter's snows had melted and the ground was dry beneath the winds of March; Antonia, delighted once again to enjoy the freedom of the woods, had wandered one day where she had never been before, until at the outskirts of the far plantation she came upon a little plot of ground hedged roughly in, and a rude cottage reared upon it, with broken plaster and thatch of many patches, and, as it seemed, of many holes as well. It stood alone upon a little piece of common land, beyond the plantation hedge. Antonia climbed the bank and looked upon it; it seemed as if it wanted the footsteps of love and blessing to enter at its rough and time-worn door. She remembered having passed a gate in the plantation bank; so turning back, she

found an outlet there. The owners were both within, an aged pair, who looked as time-worn as their dwelling-place.

'Your cottage stands so pleasantly on this high ground, I longed to come and see who lived within.'

'It's fresh and airy enow, but it's starving cold, I can promise you!' said the old woman, as she stirred up the embers of the burning wood.

'Whose cottage is it?' asked Antonia.

'Whose? why, theirs as built it! 'Tis fifty years agone since we two boiled our pot 'aneath the Squire's trees out on this waste bit here, and then we reared up a bit wall, and laid on a bit roof, and have bided here all the years since.'

'Do you work for the Squire?' Antonia asked the old man.

'No; I has worked for Maister Roger Lee, but it's not the worth of much work I can do now for any.'

"Have you all you want?' asked Antonia, who felt a little at a loss how to express her charitable inquiries; but neither of the aged people comprehended her meaning, so Antonia was quick enough to translate. 'Have you food to eat, and warm clothes to wear?' But two questions together proved fatal to the answering of either; so Antonia asked again, 'Have you food?'

'Yes, dear. What! I daresay you was hungry with this cold air! I'll get you what I have,' said the old woman; so she stepped to her closet and brought out some bread, a hard piece of cheese, and some onions. 'Ben, set a drop of water on, and I'll make a taste of tea.'

But Antonia, taking the dear old woman's hard-worn hand, said,—

'No, thank you, I am not hungry; I only wanted to know that you had food to eat.'

'Yes, yes,' said the old man, 'a little's enow for we now. I've known the day I'd eat off the best of a loaf at a meal! That rate a living would never hold now. But there's never a charity given away by the Squire, that Master Benson forgets to send us word on; and the gamekeeper's mis'es, she's rare good to a poor body; and them children of hers, pretty rogues! are as happy as lambkins to come a-skipping in with a cake from their poor mother's oven. When my mis'es was ill, with the rheumatise so bad, she see'd to her like a daughter.'

'Can you read the Bible?' asked Antonia.

'No, can't read. There was no schooling in our young time.'

'Do you get to church, and hear the Bible there?'

'Yes, yes, we always keeps our church.'

'Do you know who the Bible tells us of?'

'Don't know as I do.'

'Don't you remember any one we hear of in the Bible?'

'No, I can't say I do.'

'Don't you know anything the Bible tells us?'

'Can't say as I do.'

'Did you never hear of Jesus?'

'Not as I know of.'

'Shall I come and see you, and read to you in my own Bible?'

The double question had again to be divided, and then the old people assented to both propositions.

When Antonia went again on the following day they looked kindly upon her; and when they saw the Bible in her hand the old woman said,—

'I've been a turning it over in my mind, and now I take it in hand to consider, I do remember there's something in the Bible about "hair singed," been't there?'

Antonia welcomed this faintest of rays, and said, brightly,—

'You are quite right! I will read it to you;' and turned to the history of the three children in the fiery furnace. No apparent gleam passed over the face of the old people until Antonia read emphatically, "Nor was an hair of their head singed."

'Ah!' said the old woman, 'I told my master I knowed that was there, and so it be!'

This one link was too precious not to be secured; on the strength of it Antonia ventured to read a part of the chapter again; then shutting up her little Bible without further note or comment, she went away, having promised, unasked, to come again very soon.

On her next visit, she had but just taken her seat by their side, when the old woman looked earnestly at her and said,—

'My master and I has had enow to think on in them things you read; we mused 'em over of evenings together, and my master's put to it to think that those men as did as they were ordered should be burned up alive, and him as ordered 'em come to no harm at all? But as I tells him, they that holp him cop 'em in, must be as bad as him that ordered 'em?'

Antonia agreed, and the wonderful chapter was read again. This time they were more familiar with it, and Antonia directed their attention to the presence of "the fourth" in the fire, whose form was like the Son of God, and that it was by his power and love those whom the king had cast in were brought out without a singed hair. They took in the idea, and seemed inclined to sit and ponder no less upon the power and love of God than they had done before on the escape of the king.

On the next visit the Bible was evidently looked for with interest. Antonia talked again of the subject; they were now quite at home with it, and Antonia proceeded to say,—

'The Son of God can bring those who love Him, as safe out of the waters as out of the fires.'

'What can Him? Ah, I'll be bound Him can!'

'Shall I read you about the waters?'

'Yes, 'tis wholly stamming to think on!'

Antonia read of the storm on the Lake of Galilee, and Peter sinking. The old people were as much occupied with the fact of the Divine Son of God walking upon the water and saving the perishing Peter, as before with the walking in the fire; too much occupied for after-discourse, the happy Antonia, whose heart delighted in her aged friends, left them again. On her next visit the old woman said brightly,—

'Did ye ever hear such a wind as blew all the longfull night through? How my master and I did lie a-rocking in the blasts on it and a-thinking of Peter, and how afreard he was when it dreve on like that. But we kept a-thinking he

didn't ought to have looked off from his Saviour, then he wouldn't have been so afreard and gone sinking! Would he?'

Antonia assured them they had found out the very truth of the whole. Their hearts were now evidently awake to the thought of the rescuing Saviour; it was a moment for leading them on.

'The Son of God can raise those who love him out of their graves to meet Him,' said Antonia.

'Ah, that's a sure thing!' said the old woman, who was now prepared to believe any wonder of power, but who had not taken in Antonia's sentence. The young speaker saw in a moment that no light had flashed from her words. So she tried again: 'The Son of God can bring us safe out of the fire, out of the water, and out of the grave!'

'Ah, that's where we must look to be soon!' said the old woman, and the old man looked up.

'The Saviour can find you in your grave,' said Antonia, 'and raise you up to live with Him.'

'God grant it! God grant it!' was the only response.

How deep the delight, from time to time, as the summer days fled away, to read to such childlike listeners, ere they dropped from earthly life's laden bough, of the resurrection of the dead, of the daughter of Israel's Ruler, of the widow's only son, and Lazarus, the friend of the Saviour, with all that St. John reveals in the Gospel and Apocalypse on the immortal theme! This led on to speak of sin, and the fact of the sleepers in the dust arising, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. This brought

a shade across the bright gleam that had lighted the distance; then Antonia told them the Son of God had power on earth to forgive sins. To this truth they turned anxiously. They now realised the necessity of a preparation beyond any that they could attain; a preparation for an event so definite as rising from the grave to meet the Son of God. And when Antonia went one day the old woman said, with fast-flowing tears, which she wiped with her apron away, 'Oh, I sit and cry — I often sit and cry — to think how *innocent* I have been all my life long of the know that you bring to me now!' And so, "by precept upon precept, line upon line," their spirits climbed the bright ascent of truth divine, until they waited at Heaven's gate in prayer, and love, and hope, for entrance to be granted them there. Antonia they looked upon as God's blessing to them. When the winter returned they always feared every cold wind and snow-flake for her; but the heat, frost, and storms, not seldom seem forbidden to hurt those who labour in Heaven's ministry of love.

Their small store of household and personal stuff was worn away in the service of a lifetime, and no thought of any possible replenishment seemed ever to have entered the mind of the lone cottagers, yet of the scanty stock that remained they were willing to give! The old woman had two shawls in her possession; one of coarse black cloth, hardly larger than a large-sized handkerchief, which pinned stiffly over her thin shoulders; the other soft and pliant, of bright crimson, the shawl of her best days, now worn to thinness, but a pleasant garment to its last wearable fragment. When the

winter set in, on Antonia's entrance one day, the old woman hardly stopped to greet her before she ran to a drawer and brought out the crimson shawl, all quilted by her kind, careful fingers, into a thick, warm mat, which she laid beneath Antonia's feet, saying, ''Twill keep from the old bricks' damp feel.' Antonia had become the first object of their earthly affection, and their ministering care over her responded to hers over them. The crimson mat was always kept carefully in a drawer; but from that day Antonia was never allowed to sit with her feet on the bricks.

The aged people walked on like two gentle children hand in hand, in the pathway to Heaven, until one winter the old man entered his rest; and the next his aged wife—whose tears ceased not to flow for the lost companion of life until she found that she was going to follow where he had entered before—departed in heavenly peace, looking in blessing on all who drew near, murmuring day and night her childlike petitions to Heaven, and finally expiring with a smile of angelic joy upon her lips; her finger pointed to the skies was the last conscious expression that she gave.

We have looked forward to trace this glimpse of the cottage to its close, and must go back to the summer of Captain North's return to his home. It was in the course of that summer that the Rector of the 'Alps' became too much weakened in mind to continue the one service in the church, which he had as long as possible always performed himself. All that he could be induced to consent to was to have a curate from the neighbouring town, engaged to take the single

service on Sunday and the occasional work of the parish. Captain North obtained permission to make choice of the individual. He succeeded in securing the services of a curate whose preaching he had listened to with interest, and gladly himself increased the amount of the offered stipend to insure his pastoral supervision in the week.

'Now,' thought the soldier, 'for an interval, at least, showers of blessing will fall on the "Alps."' But the result did not answer his expectation, and long and anxiously did he ponder on the cause. The preaching of the truth was there, and the curate was one who "gave himself to the reading of the Scriptures and to prayer," but the poor gathered not to his feet, the sick listened not for his step, the whole heeded not his advice, the dying looked not up in thirsting expectation of blessing. This was the fact; but the question of its cause was a difficult and painful one. In looking anxiously on to discover the contradiction of the presence of Heavenly truth without its divine and ceaseless radiation around, there seemed but one answer, "*the love of the Spirit*" was not felt to be there: the breathing influence, the magnetic tide attracting heart to heart, was not manifest; THE MEASURE OF ITS INDWELLING POWER WAS SO LOW AS NOT TO OVERFLOW THE SURFACE, it was hidden and unfelt; the perfect circle of heavenly influence was broken in the ministry of life, and that son of the church, when he gave up this temporary charge, could not feel that he had one soul there for his hire, one ransomed spirit for his crown of rejoicing; when he quited the Alpine parish he did so unmourned, and unblessed by the benedictions of the poor.

Mr. Beltimore, calling one day at the Hall in the summer of Captain North's return to his house, said to Miss North, 'O, by the bye, I have had an application from a boy brought up in your school, the son of a tenant of mine. He says his father has bound him to a shoe-maker, which trade he abhors, and he entreats me to make inquiry into his capability, and enable him to become a schoolmaster. I think I have the letter.'

Mr. Beltimore produced the letter.

'Honoured Sir,

'I have the humble hope you will remember me, as you have always bestowed your highly esteemed commendation upon me at the yearly school examinations, where, if I may be allowed to remind you, I was always at the head of my class, and received its first prize. I made my humble suit to Miss North, by whose benevolence I have tasted the first-fruits of learning, to aid with my father to continue me in the same line, for which, if I do not mistake, I have a natural capacity; but Miss North replied to my petition that she had undertaken the education of school, and could not continue her benevolent patronage beyond it. My father turned a deaf ear to my entreaties, and has bound me to a shoemaker. I forbear to speak of his unmerciful usage, only declaring that the trade is one I must always hate and abhor; and entreating of your generous benevolence to undertake in my behalf, giving my word and honour that if my life be prolonged and health to labour in a calling suited to

my most earnest desires, I will not partake of any indulgencies beyond my absolute necessities, until I have repaid all that you, honoured sir, may have generously befriended me with. Humbly entreating your benevolent consideration of my earnest petition,

'I remain, your most obedient servant,

'JONAS LING.'

'A well-written and well-expressed composition for a lad,' remarked Mr. Beltimore, as he concluded the letter. Anastasia spoke warmly in praise of the boy's diligence and acquirements; but added, that she had made it a rule to devote herself to the children of the school, and could not undertake to follow up education beyond this limit. The boy certainly was most promising, but she could not infringe upon her rule in his behalf. Anastasia did not seem to remember that those who profess themselves only stewards of all they possess, are not at liberty to bind themselves by any self-imposed rules; their obligation is to look continually to the providential direction of their Master and Lord, whose promise is given not to fixed rules, but to constant watchfulness: "I will guide thee with mine eye." Anastasia did not consider that the very fact of what she had already done, might, in some cases, involve the Christian and expedient necessity of doing more; she made a rule, and behind that rule she entrenched herself, and so lost the field that a venture would have won!

Captain North remarked that such a lad, with a little

more training, might grow into a promising schoolmaster for the children of the tenantry of Mr. Beltimore's estate. Anastasia cooled down at this suggestion, as she did not wish to lose the few pupils who came from that parish to be taught in her school, nor the five guineas which Mr. Beltimore contributed yearly to her funds; but Mr. Beltimore finally departed, saying, he should certainly be on the look-out for an opportunity of befriending the boy.

When the autumn of that year closed in, Harry North had settled down as a resident at home. A pleasant western room had been fitted up as his study, and each one in his house bore some part in its tasteful decoration. Hours of the day were spent there in communion with the great thoughts of the great minds strewn along the pathway of Time; and though now in his manhood, he stood like a child at the feet of the Infinite, looking up to Almighty Wisdom for counsel and light, the glimmer of his finite intellect he linked by affiance with the knowledge of "the Ancient of Days," by this means gaining certain refreshment and blessing at every step of advance; while the deep waters of truth, human and divine, that flowed through his soul spread their fertilising influence on all around.

The knowledge that is learned at the feet of the 'All-wise' is purged of all selfish absorption; therefore, he who chose to learn all things only there, had a spirit always free for the social ties of home and the relative charities of life; the son never forgot the times when his father might look for his presence, or his mother most enjoy a stroll supported by

his arm, and the brother was the thoughful rememberer of the wants and the wishes of his sisters. From every point the love and the kindness he rendered, beamed back again on him in brightness and blessing.

The little Leonore he often won to his study, and tried to lead her on to a higher mental elevation, but though her young spirit had become a light in the dwelling, she grew very slowly out of childhood; her mind having been early pressed with more than it had space to accommodate, its faculties remained at a diminutive expansion, but these had been happily saved from a hopeless interment, and were all alive and awake, so that she became a little faithful attendant, always on the watch for occasions of service, devoted to her brother, Antonia, and her parents, and kind and attentive to every one; a little joyous bird, whose absent presence would have been a lost melody which every heart must have missed. Clara, under her brother's influence, added the study of the Bible to her other pursuits. But the educational habit of her mind held its powerful sway; she acquired the biblical dates, collated the various narratives of the same event, and began the study of Greek and Hebrew; but all unaccustomed to enter the lonely recesses of truth, to wait and watch while its secret unfoldings were revealed, she did not appear to gain more than added intellectual acquirement. And yet there were times when she thought of Bill Briggen and the tempestuous seas of that dark wintry night; and at those times, led on by a fresh awakening of feeling, she opened her heart to the heavenly record, and received a faint glimpse of light and love from its depths.

On Miss Keymer's return after the holidays, she had found it impossible to re-establish the schoolroom routine. Clara was still generally there, more from habit than any longer existing necessity; but Leonore was continually reading with her brother, or riding with her papa, or sitting with Antonia in Mrs. North's morning-room. Miss Keymer's conscientious mind became uneasy; her salary was a high one, and she felt her services were now most inadequate to their recompense. One morning when Antonia and Leonore were out, riding with General North, Miss Keymer made her way to Mrs. North's morning-room. It was the first time she had ventured there of her own accord; she was constrained to do so by her wish to see Mrs. North alone, her delicacy of mind dreaded the sudden liberality of the General's probably uncalculating decision, and her refinement of feeling shrank no less from the uncertainty as to the comments that might proceed from Miss North, so she knocked at the door. She heard the high-toned 'Come in,' and entered the room. Mrs. North was reposing on her couch, the Bible open before her, and Antonia's and Leonore's Bibles both lay open near, as left by the children when they ran to answer the General's sudden summons. It was a sight quite new to Miss Keymer, and in a moment her thoughts glanced from those open Bibles to the morning and evening prayer, and then back to the woods and Antonia's look up to Heaven; but all was the glance of a moment, and she began an apology for intrusion; then she met the softened tone of Mrs. North's

kind expression of feeling and approval, her decided refusal to entertain for a moment Miss Keymer's proposal for leaving, and her frank confession of regret that the work of the schoolroom should ever have been made so burdensome as it had been to Miss Keymer and her pupils in the years that were past. Miss Keymer left the room relieved and satisfied; but the deepest impression she bore away was of those open Bibles, and it seemed to her as if the tone of warm feeling she had met must have breathed from the Bible's open page.

And so the household settled quietly down. The General bore the aspect of one who was silently passing through some deep transition of feeling, awaking to questionings never aroused before, and determined to consider and follow out their unfolding. His spirit, once strong in opposition, had humbled itself beneath the word of the Eternal; who could doubt but that word would breathe peace, shining on the soul's earthly deadness and darkness, until it enkindled within it the life and light of Heaven?

And so, as the weight of years descended on the parents of that English home, a blessing more than earthly was given, enriching them with a happiness they had not known before. The soldier-son and the orphan Antonia had been the first stars whose more than earthly shining had witnessed of Heaven; and now, one by one, all were enkindling by Him who "calleth them all by their names," who leads forth the bright host of the skies, "for that He is strong in power, not one faileth!"

CHAPTER IX.

'The Alpine patron is dead!' exclaimed Captain North, one morning as he glanced over the newspaper record of mortality, '"Sir Roger de Lee, aged eighty-two." I wonder who will be his heir?'

'He has no son,' replied the General; 'but I remember hearing of a daughter, married and living abroad.'

'Alas! not much brightening of hope for the Alpine Church,' said the Captain with a sigh, and the subject dropped.

The Alpine parish was wildly irregular in landscape, here and there a little hamlet lay sheltered in a retreating valley, or hung suspended among its blossoming orchards from a hill's sloping summit. The river that flowed through the beechwoods intersected this parish, crossed by rustic bridges of village workmanship, and one for laden waggons of solid masonry. On a hill's sloping summit there stood an old dwelling of Elizabethan style, it was called the moated Grange, a dry fosse encircling its garden ground around it. Climbing over the brow of the hill and reaching down on the other side, grew a forest of pine-trees, the depth of this dark wood gave a gloomy aspect to the place, not relieved by the dilapidated state of the dwelling. It

was occupied by the farmer who cultivated the land that lay around. When that winter frost gave way, there was a stir in the stagnation of the Roger de Lee estate. The farmer occupying the moated Grange was the steward of the property; he began to build a house on a spot better suited to his personal convenience in the centre of the barns and stables where the old farm-house had originally stood; and at the same time he carried on repairs at the Grange. It was rumoured that the widowed daughter of Sir Roger de Lee was coming herself to reside on the property.

Every report of change in a country neighbourhood has its interest for all, and its importance in the estimation of some; this report that the proprietress was coming into residence was canvassed on all sides. With Miss North, it became, for the time, the one topic of the day. Now Miss North had no wings by which to poise herself in the mid-air of suspense, she was therefore compelled to alight somewhere; but as the firm basis of facts is, for the most part, of very slow elevation above the changeful sea of supposition, Miss North took the course very generally adopted of getting together all the information she could, and believing it all 'matter of fact,' whereas, in truth, it sometimes had scarcely a trustworthy atom in its whole composition. In the first place, Miss North had something to say on the subject to every one she conversed with; they in return told her all they had heard, and gratified at her evident interest in *listening*—a somewhat rare event—the speaker often added personal conjecture; all this, when

Miss North reported it herself, had assumed the nature of *fact!* In addition to this, Miss North had of course her own suppositions, inferences from surmises, and opinions formed from these two incontrovertible sources; these, when she had given them expression a few times, settled down into the looser surface of probable certainties, until, had she taken the trouble to transmit the whole composition to writing, the widowed daughter of Sir Roger de Lee might have perused it as an interesting fragment, but probably would hardly have been persuaded that it bore any affinity to herself. But then, as Miss North frequently remarked, "People do not know themselves," a statement lamentably true; and this might be the reason why, if the document had been prepared and forwarded, the widowed daughter of Sir Roger de Lee might have failed to recognise herself in the narrative.

Miss North made constant inquiry as to the progress of preparation at the old moated Grange; she had her own ideas as to the circumstantials essential to 'any one with any pretensions to society,' and these not being met by the facts of the case, she one morning gave out her opinion that the whole affair of the widowed daughter of Sir Roger de Lee coming into residence would most probably turn out a mere fiction of gossip; at which Clara very quietly said, 'O! I forgot to tell you, I heard yesterday that she was come!'

'Come! impossible, Clara! I don't believe it! Who told you? and when did she come?'

'I really cannot say when she came; but Chetwind told me last evening, that she heard she was come.'

'How very odd of Chetwind not to mention it to me! I really will see what can be learned about it; it is not my nature to let such an important event, as the residence of the patroness, pass by uninquired into.'

We need not follow Miss North in her inquiries, nor draw our information from her conclusions; apart from these, it was a fact that Mrs. Barrington, the widowed daughter of Sir Roger de Lee, was come, and was occupying the moated Grange.

'I suppose, mamma, you will not think of calling upon Mrs. Barrington,—not, at all events, until we know something more about her?'

'I think,' replied Mrs. North, 'we know quite enough to venture a call. We know that she is a widow lady, occupying a house on her property here.'

'Yes, but such a place to come to reside in—that dreary old moated Grange! she must, to say the least, be a very eccentric person. I hear that books and pictures are come without end, but not a single upholsterer has set foot in the house! There will be quite a feeling of ill-will among the tradespeople about it.'

'My dear Anastasia, I hope the tradespeople trouble themselves a great deal less than you do with other people's concerns; if not, they must be subject to endless perturbation, out of which we cannot help them. I can only say, I shall most certainly call at the Grange.'

A few days after this conversation, Mrs. North was out in the carriage with Clara and Antonia, and ordered the coachman to drive to the Grange, not supposing that Anastasia felt any particular wish to pay this much-questioned visit. The carriage entered through the decaying gates, and drew up at the door. A superannuated bell received two or three brisk pulls from the footman, and the door was opened by an elderly man, who, on observing Mrs. North, gave a soldier's salute. Mrs. Barrington was at home. Mrs. North, Clara, and Antonia, followed the aged servant through a considerable length of passages, until he left them in a capacious apartment with whitewashed walls and black door. A sofa near an open window, which commanded a most lovely view, offered an inviting seat: in a few moments a rather elderly lady entered the room, and received her visitors with frank cordiality. One glance at Mrs. Barrington was sufficient to raise Mrs. North's estimation to no ordinary level. Small in figure, dignified in her whole deportment, with a bright intelligence of countenance, over which a shadowy sadness rested, giving a softened depth to all its varying expression. There was no lack of animated conversation, and on taking leave, Mrs. North said venturingly, 'If we, as old residents, could meet any requirements you may find unprovided for, it would give us much pleasure!' Mrs. Barrington responded warmly, but added with a smile, 'I have been long enough used to a roving life to have acquired an independence of much that to others would be essential. I found my tent ready pitched, and I

was soon settled in it.' Then looking with her kindling smile upon Antonia and Clara, she said, 'It is long since any young life has been associated with me, but it will give me pleasure to know more of those who have so kindly called on me to-day.' Antonia's speaking eyes looked a reply.

Contrary to expectation, Anastasia was amazed at the visit having been made without her; but Mrs. North cut that thread of discussion short at once with more than usual resolution; and gave so attractive a description of Mrs. Barrington that the General protested he should be under the necessity of ringing up the old soldier, in the hope of gaining admittance himself. But in a few days an old-fashioned coach, drawn by black horses, drove up through the beech-woods; it bore the Roger De Lee arms, and Mrs. Barrington was ushered into the drawing-room.

The conversation in the evening turned on the new resident. General North had been charmed by her. Her dignified benignity and decision, combined with the cultivation of mind acquired by a life of travel and accurate observation, marked her as one that none could pass by unobserved, and satisfied to the utmost the General's quick penetration. To Anastasia's great regret, she missed this return visit; and her surprise was equally great that no one had questioned the new resident as to her intentions and plans; but her father replied to her regrets by saying, 'I advise you to be careful how you venture too far, Anastasia; you will not find Mrs. Barrington one to put up with inquisitive impertinence!'

Now and then Anastasia got a decided set-down from her

parents, but it only annoyed for the moment, for the heart that has outgrown its childhood must root out its own faults; no reproof from without can weaken their hold without a corresponding effort from within.

Captain North's flickering hopes now began to burn up brightly for that beloved Alpine parish.

It was not long before Mrs. North proposed to invite the new resident to a social dinner, and the General insisted on carrying the invitation. He rode in at the heavy old gate with Antonia, the old soldier who opened the door said his mistress was out 'thinning the woods;' they rode on to find her; there she stood among the tall straight stems of the fir-trees, with another old veteran beside her, in his jacket of faded scarlet, cleaving away with his bill-hook at the thick undergrowth of laurel and seringa as if he were cutting a passage for ammunition waggons through a forest: and a woodman beside her, marking at her direction the trees that must fall to open the view of the lovely landscape beyond.

'Our favourite will people the land with old soldiers!' said the General to Antonia. Meanwhile the one left at the door of the Grange was stepping after them, lured on irresistibly by the sight of the old war-horse, 'and such a young thing upon him, and he after nothing but minding her hand,' and the veteran with the bill-hook fixed his eyes on the same object of attraction. Mrs. Barrington greeted her visitors, adding, 'You have found me at my trade, letting in air, light, and view! Is not that our work here?' she asked with a bright, inquiring look, and the General responded by silence;

for he felt there was a deeper meaning in her words than the laying a laurel-bush, or even a forest pine-tree, low. Mrs. Barrington accepted the pressing invitation, and the whole family party looked forward to the anticipated evening with interest and pleasure.

In Mrs. Barrington's presence you felt at once that she was far above studying the polite or playing the agreeable, and yet Mrs. Barrington was both polite and agreeable. Her outward deportment was not one of those polished surfaces on which the commonplaces of general society can roll smoothly in interchanging play, leaving everything exactly as before, with the exception of the additional weariness inseparable from all earthly monotonies. Mrs. Barrington's external grace was not that of a statue, which, having been finished off by art, continues in perpetuity the same; but the subtle charm that you cannot define, emanating from the intelligent, responsive spirit within, and transmitting its high moral independence of feeling in expression. A heart she had whose sympathies had been exercised from childhood, and deepened in no ordinary degree by personal and relative trial. Neither had her mental faculties been laid on the shelf; on the contrary, they had been kept constantly awake and active, no less than the moral powers of her soul; she maintained therefore through life a completeness of character, the natural result of which was quickness of apprehension and readiness of judgment. Such a character could not but rise to a higher elevation of influence, than those whose training and habits leave them permanently one-sided, the moral

powers called alone into the arena of life, and the mental dismissed under the delusion of their not being equally practical, or the mental developed, and the moral starved into mere spectral shadows. A character firm as Mrs. Barrington's in the integrity of all its powers, was strong in its gentleness as in its truth; but because it was true, it was turned from by those who loved not the searchings of truth.

Mrs. Barrington paid her first evening visit to the Hall. She blended with the family circle with so natural an ease, that she seemed almost like one of themselves. The evening hours glided away without the aid of music, or any of those auxiliaries generally useful as a pleasant substitute for the effort of making conversation. It would have been interest enough on that evening to occupy the post of observation alone, for it was no everyday circle assembled in that country drawing-room, and the guest in the midst possessed the rare and happy power of drawing out to "air, light, and view," the minds around her; skilful in calling forth the harmony of mind, she seemed to know the kindred points to touch, and how by listening silence to let the harmony flow on until it rose to its full measure, or by a sudden and effective turn she would repress a discord, while she was not herself unready with pleasant force to fill up the parts which her own mind could best supply.

It was natural to attribute the evening's enjoyment entirely to Mrs. Barrington's most agreeable society, but the fact was that each one, Mrs. Barrington included, had been refreshed, by opening and expanding in the sunshine of genial

and reciprocal feeling. Miss North alone had been kept rather on the stretch, watching for an opportunity to turn the swift stream of conversation into some one or other of the little ready-made canals or natural creeks she had always in view; but the stream flowed on, and Miss North was disappointed. The three juniors of the party were left to occupy their youthful places of listening observation; they were happy in it, each one according to their nature. Antonia, accustomed from her childhood to hush her very breathing to listen and look upon the beautiful and true, wherever gleaming forth around her, had a silent, deep communion, in thought and feeling, with all that possessed native interest, which rendered her very independent of any personal appeal for enjoyment; so she spread her little spiritual sail of transparent feeling on the broad stream of conversation, and was wafted on by every breath of utterance. Clara was satisfied, because she could quietly moor her bark, and listen or muse abstractedly, without any fear of confluent tides. And Leonore, innocently unconscious of most of the various topics and their relative merits, folded her little wings upon the bank, and was happy, because, as the stream of conversation passed her by, it flowed all untroubled and bright.

It was quite evident that evening that the link of a friendship was fastened not likely to be unbound again.

Some weeks passed away. Mrs. Barrington had more than once repeated her social evening visit to the Beechwood Hall, and now she invited her friends there to spend an evening with her at the Grange. A little carpenter's work

and fresh painting had effaced the forlorn look that before hung about the exterior of the old moated Grange, constant mowing was softening the lawns, and the whole aspect of the place already told of a higher influence reigning around. The old soldier, who opened the door, had evidently done his best on that evening to show honour to his guests by his personal appearance, or more probably to stand up in his place worthy of his mistress: he conducted the party to a room now finally prepared as Mrs. Barrington's sitting room. The hall and passages still retained their whitewash, and the doors their black paint; but on entering the room the visitors almost forgot that they were still in the old moated Grange, the long low apartment presented so attractive an aspect. The walls had been coloured with pale green, and were hung with paintings, from whose canvas youth and beauty, manhood and age, rivalled the living group below. The three windows were curtained with old embroideries, whose richly-wrought fantastic devices gave a picturesque variety that added not a little to the whole effect. Low bookshelves stood round the room in front of the wainscot; tables of different descriptions, old-fashioned chairs and settees, completed the furniture of the apartment; a covered harp stood in one corner.

Heartfelt was the welcome Mrs. Barrington gave, and heartfelt was the response it received. A feeling of enchantment stole over the guests, as, with all the past associations of the dreary old place still full in remembrance, they took their seats on those old-fashioned settees and chairs of differ-

ent kinds, while from the hearth-rug a noble St. Bernard raised his calm, benevolent eye of inquiry and welcome. They felt in all around the intellectual and elevated tone of the being whose dignified sweetness of deportment gave the living charm to the whole.

The two old soldiers in waiting soon entered bearing coffee, served in little costly old cups, with the curious old silver of the Roger de Lee family.

General North's attention was attracted by the picture over the mantelpiece; it was that of a very aged man, whose eyes and hands were raised as in act of supplication.

'Was that your father?' the General at length asked, in a tone whose deep feeling could only make the inquiry welcome.

'Yes: it is a portrait done from recollection by a friend, an artist who saw him often, and not seldom in prayer. It seems almost too sacred for a general room; but the fact is, I have received you in the one which I have prepared as my own constant sitting-room, and I could not part with that picture from my presence.' And then, seeing the interest depicted in the countenances of the two gentlemen and Mrs. North, as their glance followed her own around the room, Mrs. Barrington went on to say, 'The one above my writing-table is a portrait of my husband, Lieut.-General Barrington; the one on the left is of my son, who fell before his father; and that on the right a picture of my only daughter when an infant; she, too, sleeps in a foreign land.'

'Bereft of all?' exclaimed the General.

'I would rather say, I have seen all taken home!'

Mrs. Barrington met the deep interest awakened in her guests by relating to the General and Mrs. North a few particulars of the last years of her father's life, during which she had been his constant companion. Other portraits adorned the walls, but no further inquiry was made. A subdued feeling had fallen on her guests, and Mrs. Barrington had to make one or two attempts before she succeeded in awakening the conversation into a general flow again. The little antique silver urn was soon brought in; Antonia, at Mrs. Barrington's request, made the tea, while Leonore, who, with Miss Keymer, was also of the party, stepped in and out of the circle, happy in her office of cup-bearer.

As the evening advanced, Captain North, seeing the harp, ventured to ask whether Mrs. Barrington played on that instrument.

'No, I never play now! And that harp was never mine; it belonged to the one treasure still left me on earth—the friend of my youth! She is now a resident with her husband in India, and her harp has been always where I was since my return to England; its strings break one by one, and so many are broken that I never venture to uncover it now, for I could not let any one restore what her fingers last strung. I have paid dearly for the relic, for every chord that gives way sends a vibration through me that I do not easily recover: but they must be mostly gone now, and some day she may come to restore them. That is her picture,' continued Mrs. Barrington, turning to a portrait that hung

on the wall, on which each one had looked many times since they entered the room: 'the young girl looking up to her face is her only child left in England under her paternal uncle's care.'

It was a picture to look upon in silence, but once seen to be never forgotten—the bending elegance of the maternal figure, combined with its breathing majesty of mien; the depth of expression, full of mournful thought as it gazed down upon the child; and the radiant child in the rosy bloom of life's morning, the long golden ringlets flowing back over her shoulders of snow, and the glance of her eyes of light and love as they seemed raised in appeal to her mother—there was a spirituality about the picture that left all its materialism a completely secondary element, winning the eye again and again with the fascination of actual life.

The evening drew to its close; it had been one not only to charm, but to soften and deepen the heart; and warm were the parting farewells. Mrs. Barrington invited Clara to come and spend a day with her alone; Clara was surprised, but received the invitation with pleasure. As Antonia passed out last from the room, Mrs. Barrington drew the orphan within her arm and kissed her.

On one of these summer days, the Alpine bell tolled for a funeral; it was the burial of a young man who died after a few days' illness; his mother wept so bitterly above his grave that the curate delayed his return to the town, that he might pay her a visit of sympathy. Soon after the funeral he went to the house, and found the parents alone.

'If I had known of your son's hopeless illness I would have come over to see him!'

'Thank you, sir; I did put it to him, but he had no mind for it.'

'Did he then keep in the same hardened state to the last?'

'Well, sir,' said the mourning mother, 'he never was a hardened sinner; he was the kindest child I had, and a good word would draw him any day from his own worser way—only then he turned back to it again!'

'I spoke to him more than once,' said the curate, 'but I fear without any effect.'

'Well, sir, if I may be so bold now the earth is above him, poor boy! he laid it to heart you should turn upon him as you did. That time as you first came—'tis as fresh in my thoughts as yesterday—when you see'd some youngsters was getting over the pales as you passed by to the church, and you threatened them all with the constable; he never would go to church from that day, for he said he never knew a parson came to help folks up afore a justice! And sure and certain, I believe if you had given him a good word, he would have turned and followed you in like a lamb; but he never would mind for bad words—his spirit was up in no time against them!'

'But I did call only a few weeks ago, and talked to him most kindly, and urged him to come to church, and turn from his bad ways.'

'Yes, sir; and never a poor lad was nearer saved than

my poor boy was then. O, 'tis killing to think on! the very next Sunday morning he said his mind was made up; he was all dressed, up to his hat, and ready to go to church. "Now mother," says he to me, "I'll see if the parson really has a care whether I go or not. I'll stand here in our doorway all ready for church; and if he has a care, he'll remember all them words he said to me, and give a look as he passes to see if I have minded 'em, and am coming." Well, sir, there he stood as you passed by to the church, and you never so much as cast eyes on the cottage nor on him; a word or a look would have saved him that day, but you never gave either. He turned right in and said, "Mother, 'tis all trade in the parson! he cares never the worth of *a look* whether I minded his words or not, so no more preaching for me!" He threw off his coat, and from that day he was, as you may say, a lost lad! Poor child! I've cried my heart dry for him, for, as I always shall say, a look would have saved him; and now, God above only knows where my poor boy bides for ever, but his mother will never list the church-bell ring out without a broken heart over him.'

CHAPTER X.

Most of the residents in the neighbourhood had at once followed Mrs. North's example, and called at the Grange. Among these was a Mrs. Astell and her daughter Laura. Laura was rather a noted person in the society of that neighbourhood. She was an only child and had grown up the victim, not of over-pressure, but of idleness. A clever child, averse to the effort of continued application; one of those to whom the discipline of regulated occupation would have been invaluable. She had none of Antonia's *conceptive* power, and therefore not to be left as Antonia was, to follow out her own education, with any hope of like results; neither had she that which often accompanies conceptive power, mental faculties so lightly hung that even moderate coercion affects permanently their delicate balance. She possessed the quickness that belongs to cleverness, and the tension of mind that would have enabled her to keep her powers of application in moderately enforced exercise without injury. Any experienced observer noticing the child would have discovered that there was no gushing spring of thought within, no meditative contemplation which asked to be guided in its own development, rather than supplanted from without;

these were not, but there was a clever quickness, which flashed for a moment on that which came in contact with it, and then went out. Laura's parents did not weigh this important distinction, and because the child was cleverly quick, they gladly acted on the self-indulgent belief that there was no necessity for enforced application.

Laura's governess was not blinded by the fond delusion of the child's parents; she saw that steady application was essential to Laura's character, but she could not enforce it; and she had not the wit to win her to it. Day after day she set the child the same tasks, and reasoned with her in the same tone; until Laura, in the irritation of tired-out impatience, dashed her school-books away and rushed out of the room. Could that well-meaning governess, unaided as she was by authority, have only fallen back on her own mental resources, and striking out a line attractive in freshness, have engaged the child's heart by some intelligent natural pursuit, content to leave grammars, and catechisms, and skeleton epitomes on the shelf, she might have beguiled the child into interest and knowledge; and as the habit of attention and the thirst for information increased, tougher application might not in the end have been rejected; without this the case was hopeless.

Could Laura have been transferred in her childhood to Mrs. North's unyielding enforcement of school discipline, the result would probably have been equally a failure, because the child did not possess the negative receptive power which would have enabled her to prose on in unchanging acquire-

ment. Minds must be trained like plants, in accordance with their nature, or the guardians and instructors of childhood must find themselves outdone by the nurseryman and florist.

Laura had equally grown up without a single well-directed effort having been made to call forth her unselfish sympathies, or to discipline her heart in moral duties and obligations; mentally and morally she was undisciplined and uncultivated, with a wild and vagrant growth of nature, that sometimes gave mournful glimpses of what, if trained by wisdom's hand, she might have been.

To any mind accustomed from childhood to consult its own will and please itself alone, satiety of all things must be the unavoidable result. Laura having no object in life but her own amusement, often found the stagnation around her almost insupportable. She had seen the same faces, heard the same tone of conversation, received the same ready-made compliments, until she declared that she knew how every one was going to look, the attitudes and movements that would best exhibit their studied gracefulness, and the tenor of all they would say. 'Who would not be wearied into dullness itself under such an amount of knowledge, mamma? It would be an inexpressible relief if I had not a memory, that all this everlasting flat of society might sometimes look fresh instead of always resenting the perpetuity of sameness!'

Laura at length devised a palliative remedy; she seized on her imaginative faculty, and compelled it into her service. Her native powers had not, like those of Anastasia and Clara, been submerged by a weight of acquirement; on

the contrary, they were utterly without ballast, threatening the wreck of the vessel whose prosperous voyage they ought to have aided. Laura had, as clever people have, a quick perception in any particular line to which they especially direct their attention, and she set to work, by her own account, "to strike out a few sparks from the smouldering embers of general society." She discovered every one's particular failing, and showed them up, as she declared, to admiration. It was done with a gravity of assumed interest, only sometimes betrayed by the mischief that danced in her eye; and she guarded her attempts so well that, if discovered, she could, with the aid of more or less effrontery, make good her retreat into the stronghold of a wish for information; though every one was perfectly aware that information was the very last wish Laura Astell entertained, except on such points as aided her personal entertainment. Anastasia North presented a capital mark, because, being engrossed with her own doings and her own opinions, she could the more readily be set off and shown up. Anastasia sometimes found herself fairly caught, and publicly confused, but her self-assurance soon enabled her to recover self-possession, which her antagonist always allowed her very readily to do, desiring nothing more than to triumph in passing, by swamping the subject of discussion in momentary folly. Another kind of trap was laid for Clara. Laura would get up beforehand the technicalities of some abstruse subject, of which she in reality understood nothing, and watching a favourable opportunity for observation, address inquiries to Clara which

grounded her entirely, and set her labouring mind at work for days or weeks to come; often in the end discovering that the poser was a mere fiction, the thin disguise of which she had not, at the precise given point, possessed knowledge sufficient to penetrate. Poor Clara, whose wit had not a crevice left to look out from in her overstored mind, knew not how to get the better of her merciless persecutor. To entrap Antonia cost Laura many a weary scheme; but in vain, and she was compelled to make it her constant aim to have Antonia in the distance, to prevent the possibility of her entering the lists to the rescue. 'Now, my dear Antonia, I do entreat you not to fix upon me the full gaze of those orbicular eyes; they have such a fascination, that they paralyse all my powers of comprehension!' but the playful reproof in the shake of Antonia's head did not leave Laura the victory. Confessing this one day to her mother, Laura added, 'But I don't mind being foiled by Antonia! I have nothing to say against freshness, I only hunt those who run in a groove: it is such fun to see how they wear down the same channel deeper and deeper, until they cannot reach up even to peep over the side; then they not only run hopelessly on, but get at last to believe that all desirable things are comprehended for evermore between their own two straight lines!'

Mrs. Barrington's residence at the Grange was an event of more than usual interest for Laura, the place had looked from her childhood utterly lost and forlorn, and the fact of the proprietress suddenly turning it into a country residence,

without any notable transformations, held out a hope that something more than common might be the result. 'Even take it at the worst, and suppose the resident proprietress an absolute miser, still that is not a character that you meet with every day, at least in its extremes; and any variety must be a refreshment, when the chief misery is unchangeable monotony:' such was Laura's declaration. 'Let her be what she will, mamma, at all events it is a novelty until we have seen her, and I feel grateful for the slight eddy she has infused in the universal stagnation.'

Laura persuaded her mamma to make an early call at the Grange. On their way home they drove through the beech-woods to call on Mrs. North. It happened to be the day after Mrs. Barrington's invitation to the Grange had been accepted by Mrs. North.

'Now, mamma,' said Laura, before going in, 'whatever you do, if Anastasia be in the room, don't let out that we have been to the Grange! Mrs. North is pretty sure not to ask you, at all events not in curiosity's hurry; and you observe, I will sit as far as possible from Anastasia, and you will see she will make her way up to me in no time, with THE GRANGE in broad text on her face!'

Accordingly Laura took her seat at a far-off window with Clara. Anastasia, who liked to be first with a younger rather than second with an elder, made her way along the length of the room to Laura, with an instant inquiry, 'Have you called at the Grange?'

'Yes, we called there this morning.'

'Was Mrs. Barrington at home?'

'She was within the ruin, if that may be called being "at home!"'

'Yes; is it not strange that she should not study appearance a little more, than to inhabit a place in such a condition?'

'Particularly strange; most unusual to set appearance so entirely at naught!'

'But, Laura, did you see her?'

'Yes, the answer was "at home;" so of course Mrs. Barrington presented herself.'

'What did you think of her? papa and mamma are delighted with her; but Mr. Beltimore said, that though he certainly had not much opportunity of judging, as several other people were calling at the same time with him, he must say he thought her a little too high for whitewashed walls! But what did you think?'

'O, excuse my thoughts on the subject; they are so peculiar and unusual that I mean to publish them separately.

'Nonsense! do tell me.'

'My dear Anastasia, I stake the credit of all my good sense in not making over my opinion as a third, to be tacked on to the two you already possess, for the bewilderment of the next head you may question; which possibly might not be so strong a one as yours or mine, and so hardly able to hold its own against your treble infusion.'

'Really, Laura, it is a perpetual trial of all patience to talk with you.'

O, pardon me, I will answer you with all frankness. I

thought Mrs. Barrington, as you remarked just now, strangely peculiar.'

'Well, she struck me as being so, but I have not yet had her at all to myself; did she talk to you?'

'O no, I left the shuttlecock to her and mamma.'

'Mrs. Barrington has invited us all to spend an evening with her next week,' continued Anastasia. 'I confess I feel curious to see what sort of reception we shall have!'

'O, bottle it all up for me! don't let it lose anything, not even an opinion or inference, before I come to drink it all in. But mamma will be departing; we have been so unfortunate as to find all our friends at home, which hurries us a little, and I want to arrange with you for a pic-nic.'

This conversation had passed before the evening visit to the Grange: that visit was no sooner over than Laura Astell made an early call to hear all particulars. Even Clara warmed up in description, but Anastasia had felt herself evidently in the background.

'Really, Anastasia, I would not hold off in this way if I were you. Mrs. Barrington looks good enough to be delighted with your charities. I would advise you to step forward a little, and invite her at once to your school. At present it seems that Mrs. Barrington has found no point in common with you—never even appealed to you, and yet you confess that you believe her to be charitable like yourself! Really it is quite personal!'

'I cannot say, "never appealed to me," but nothing more than *politeness* required, and I like *friendliness* in those I

associate with: if I cannot have that, I would rather have nothing.'

'Now, Anastasia, take my advice. Clara is going to spend the day, it seems, alone with Mrs. Barrington. You may be sure Mrs. Barrington has not the least idea of the efforts to which your life is devoted; if she had, and is as you believe charitable, why should you be passed over? "Birds of a feather flock together!" I would have you drive with Clara to the Grange, and make a call on your own account, and ask Mrs. Barrington to visit your school; speak out and show what you are made of, and then abide by the consequences.'

'I think I might do that. Mrs. Barrington could not but feel it an attention that I should ask her to inspect my school!'

And Laura went exulting home. 'O mamma! if I have not persuaded Anastasia North into the veriest trap that ever eyes set foot in! I only wish I could see her caught! But really, I have done a good deed under a bad one, for if she does not get a righting from that little empress of a woman, I don't know who on earth can cure her; even I shall give her up then, and I am sure half the doses I have given her would have been health to a dozen ill of the same complaint. I do believe self has no eyes, for she never sees the hook.'

Mrs. Barrington received Anastasia and Clara in another apartment from that in which they had spent the evening, a room still retaining its whitewashed walls.

'I came this morning,' Anastasia began, 'I having had so little opportunity of personal intercourse with you, and I longed to feel more sociable!'

Mrs. Barrington looked slightly surprised.

'Also there were several subjects I have been wishing to talk to you upon.'

Mrs. Barrington responded very courteously.

'I have been making what little effort I could, for some time past, in the way of schools and cottage-visiting. It would give me great pleasure to introduce you to my school, and to know your opinion of the children's proficiency.'

'I am afraid I should disappoint you in my estimation—'

'Surely you approve of education for all classes?' asked Anastasia, interrupting the sentence addressed to her in reply.

'Yes, of *education;* but I can only call that education which aims at fitting the child for the station appointed for it by God.'

'But you would not think the child unfitted for its station because its ignorant mind is instructed?'

'Let us understand each other. Education and instruction are terms used very vaguely, and if we use them so, we shall never meet at the same point: will you tell me what you aim at in your school?'

'Certainly; it is on a well-approved system, and its aim is religious, moral, and mental instruction.'

'What does its religious instruction consist in?'

'Biblical knowledge, of course! You would find the children very ready in Scripture proofs, parallel passages, chapter and verse, dates, &c.'

'And may I ask in what its moral instruction consists?'

'Explanations of Scripture, religious books; of course the whole influence is moral!'

'And its mental instruction?'

'O, there we just aim to do what we can in the short period we can keep them. History, geography, arithmetic, grammar, writing, spelling, a little astronomy to enlarge their minds, a slight idea of chemistry; in fact, we do crowd in all we can, and yet it is all cut short, mournfully soon, by their necessity of service.'

'But is not that *necessity of service* the will of God for them?'

'Yes, of course we know it is; but we must make the best we can of the time before it comes.'

'My dear Miss North, if instead of these hurried expressions and estimates you will reflect for a moment, you surely will see that you have a mistake hidden somewhere! Let me suggest to you, that if you will analyse these several lines of instruction you will find that, with very minor exceptions, they all resolve themselves into exercises of mind! Your labour is bestowed in stimulating, to the highest point that is possible, the minds of those destined, not to mental, but to manual toil. Be assured Life is not designed by its great Author to be a patch of mind here, and a patch of body there, but a blended whole; and when our instruction aims at rising above this level, we err, perhaps more dangerously than when it falls below it.'

'But I think you must be aware how many a first-rate mind has risen from the peasant class?'

'Yes, and will still rise; mind will find its natural level. It is not mind that you raise in those whose faculties you

stimulate to the utmost; it is rather, I fear, mere acquirement, self-sufficiency, and a mistaken independence.'

'Would you then leave them uninstructed?'

'No, I would educate all, of every class: that is, I would aim to impart that, and that only, which may best qualify them for their social and relative duties. All stimulating strain of mind I would avoid in those whom God has appointed to manual, not mental occupation. If God has given a mind capable of rising, such quiet aid will be quite sufficient to develope mental power if it exist; and such minds will rise, not in shoals, self-sufficient from mere acquirement, but here and there in native power and true humility. Where I found such a mind I would aid its advance by every means in my power.'

'But why not aim to raise all to a higher position?'

'I fear your aim errs from the mark. It is not by filling the mind with ideas alien from its calling in life that you can raise the individual, but by ennobling the spirit that goes forth to its work and to its labour. This ennobling of spirit you will never attain, in any general degree, by crowding mental demands upon it, but by the simplest, the most peaceful, and most patient education of it for its temporal position and its present and eternal happiness. But if you look upon a life of service as a mere *necessity*, you will impart the same tone of feeling, which I cannot hesitate to say is a false one. If you would raise the mass, you must look upon their life of service as a heavenly calling, to be ennobled by the spirit, the faithfulness, and the skill, with which its every requirement is discharged.'

Anastasia, finding the subject did not take as she had expected, was anxious to glide out of it, and remarked, 'We had one boy of the kind to whom you refer, most promising, and capable in every way; his father bound him to a shoemaker, but he is still aspiring!'

'Has any opening been provided for testing his powers?'

'O yes; I have spoken for him to the proprietor of the estate on which his father resides, and he has kindly promised to embrace the first opportunity for promoting his wishes.'

Anastasia thought this a good point at which to take leave, with a little show of triumph in this case of Jonas Ling. She took her leave, and turned away to think precisely the same, and to follow the same line of practice, as before.

Mrs. Barrington, who always kept her spirit free by "speaking the truth in love" whenever the occasion required it, and by never speaking unlovely truth of the absent when no occasion rendered it necessary, turned with undisturbed benignity to Clara, and said, 'Now, my love, will you take off your bonnet and shawl, and we will go in to luncheon.'

CHAPTER XI.

Mrs. Barrington was one of those whose ministry of love takes the highest line,—thoughtful always for the *hearts* that crossed her path, not only for their several sorrows, sufferings, or wants. Never could she see the young needing timely aid without the attempt to meet the want, and leave the heart and mind enriched. 'O, think,' she would sometimes say to others, 'what it is, by friendly influence or extended sympathy, to enlarge and enrich one human soul, and so to expand and brighten the whole circle of its life-long energies!' It was this feeling which had led Mrs. Barrington to invite Clara to spend a day in companionship with herself alone. She had observed the absent look on Clara's countenance: it was not an expression that indicated natural indifference, neither was it expressive of any concentration in self; it seemed the reflection of a mind that had never learned to blend itself with other minds, and to associate its thoughts and feelings with all that might be passing in its own circle.

On the day of Clara's visit Mrs. Barrington conversed with her on her favourite pursuits, and took such evident interest in the conversation that Clara was led to be much

more communicative than usual. At length Mrs. Barrington remarked,—

'Then as yet, I think, you have devoted yourself to one only of the three great departments of knowledge,—the knowledge to be learned from books?'

Clara replied by a silent look of inquiry, as to what other sources she could have drawn from. Mrs. Barrington responded to the look.

'There is the world of Nature, and the world of Human Life. We must not pass over these living pages to lose ourselves in the inanimate alone.'

I am very fond of botany,' rejoined Clara

Mrs. Barrington smiled.

'Ah, well, botany is one of the wonderful secrets of Nature which she whispers to all, and unfolds to the patient inquirer; but her secrets are so large, and our finite apprehension so small in its beginnings, that we are in danger of losing ourselves in some one of her depths, and forgetting that she has a universe to unfold, with an endless variety of facts, each as absorbing in its interest as the science of botany. You will never gain the enlargement and delight of a general acquaintance with Nature, if you go to her with human guide-books only. You must open your heart to receive her in her own communings with you alone. Books will help you in knowledge of facts, but you will never hold the world of Nature in your *head*. It must be, as the wise man tells us, in our "heart;" and to possess it there your acquaintance must be a personal one. So, you see, a bright increase of knowl-

edge awaits you still in the universe of Nature,—and, perhaps, not less in the world of Human Life ?'

Mrs. Barrington looked up as she said these words, with a tenderness of inquiry that Clara felt and longed to reply to, but knew not how. So completely had she been incarcerated in her circle of books, that she had never habitually realised that there was *a world* of human life, with its wants, its efforts, its claims, gathered around her. She had never been taught in her childhood the fact, that in God's providential dispensation of time the wants of some must be unsatisfied if we do not each one rise to supply them; the efforts of some must fall to the ground if our friendly hand lend not its aid,—the claims of fellow-creatures lie unmet if we pass them over unseen or unfelt. No one had taken her by the hand when her earliest sympathies were unburdened and free, and led her on in life's ministry of love. Therefore, Clara had to consider for a minute before she could define in her own mind what Mrs. Barrington meant by knowledge of the world of human life; and even after consideration her apprehension was not very clear.

The afternoon quietly passed in conversation; and as the cool of evening approached, Mrs. Barrington asked Clara if she were disposed for a walk. To this Clara gladly assented. They wandered down from the old moated Grange, where the sunbeams were shedding golden lustre on pine-woods, sloping lawns, and masonry of old red brick. Clara had a new feeling in her heart as she walked by Mrs. Barrington's side, who gently leaned upon her arm; she felt, for the first

time in life, the chosen object of a higher nature than her own: the very fact of being chosen, and the effortless pleasure this elder friend seemed able to find in her companionship, had an elevating influence, and drew out a responsive power in her of which before she was unconscious. The first decaying leaves of autumn were floating slowly to the ground, —Nature's testimony to inspiration's record, "the flower fadeth;" but the summer foliage still hung in its rich, heavy masses high above, the rose still bloomed upon the cottage walls, and the ripened fruit waited for the gatherer's hand.

As they walked together, Mrs. Barrington said to Clara,—

'I want to inspect the progress of some cottages I am rebuilding. The cottages on General North's estate always seem to me inscribed with the inspired inquiry, "Have we not all one Father?" The comfort of each little homestead seems to have been as much thought of by your parents as the perfection of their own residence. Mine, alas! present a sad contrast. My dear father was for many years too infirm to visit this distant little estate: I had not seen it since my childhood. I am very anxious to rear some good cottages before winter, but building is a new essay to me. I want you to give me some hints.'

But Clara had no ideas on the subject, and they walked on somewhat silently. Mrs. Barrington's was a living, expressive silence, never oppressing like a weight, which some attempt must be made to lighten, but rather winning its companion spirit to a kindred tone, or alluring to expression of its deepest feelings;—a silence which a sense of sacredness in-

vests; a silence not to be interrupted by trifling impertinences, but always inviting the utterance of thoughts and feelings,—some of which, perhaps, never found expression before, and open to any sensible inquiry or appeal.

Mrs. Barrington stopped at one of the most ruinous cottages on the Roger-de-Lee estate. Some workmen were rearing a new one a little further back on the higher ridge of the cottage garden-ground, where the moisture from the springs would settle less, and the greater part of the little plot of land would lie in front of the dwelling.

'If you have no experience in cottages,' Mrs. Barrington said to Clara, 'I will not tire you with standing about on the uneven ground. Will you sit down in the cottage until I come back?'

The poor woman accompanied Mrs. Barrington, who wished to discover from her tenants any little preference or wish they might have in the arrangement of the cottage. A rosy little girl was at play on the cottage floor, bare-footed, and dressed in a ragged, round, blue pinafore. A fat baby was lying asleep in the cradle. Clara sat in perfect silence, and the little girl sat equally motionless on the floor, gazing on Clara. This suspension of animated life might have continued until Mrs. Barrington's return, had not the large baby in the cradle begun to cry. Clara was sorry, but had no conception what course to adopt, and therefore turned her head another way, and looked out of the window. At length the little girl, of some four years of age, from her seat on the floor said, by way of advice,—

'Charley wants a rocking!'

Still Clara did not appear convinced that she was the person to rock.

'Charley wants a rocking!' screamed out the little girl on the floor, in a tone imperative of attention.

Clara felt rather alarmed at what might follow next. She looked at the children, but remained still a fixture. Then the little child on the floor laid herself down on her side, and began with one hand to try and pull down the cradle-rocker to produce a slight motion. This final appeal was irresistible. Clara rose up, and rocked the cradle with extreme care; but still the baby cried.

'Charley want to get up!' the elder baby pronounced at last; and Clara weighed in her mind whether she could venture to act on this further admonition. The baby looked of walking size, and Clara decided that she would venture to put him on his feet.

When she stooped to lift the baby he stretched out his little arms; Clara lifted him out of his cradle bed, as if he had been a curious piece of human mechanism that a wrong touch might disorganise. The baby, when landed on the floor, turned round and looked with great solemnity on his liberator; then, safe on his little rosy feet, toddled up to his sister and sat down by her. Clara now watched the children with a living interest, and engaged her thoughts in planning a scheme for purchasing, making, and bringing them some new little garments; the first time that such purposes had suggested themselves to her mind.

Clara had still some apprehension from fear of what the mother might think when she found the baby dislodged from the cradle. The poor woman soon returned, leaving Mrs Barrington with the builders. She looked first at the children, and then gratefully at Clara, saying,—

'I am afraid, miss, the children have troubled you!'

'O no, I was only afraid of doing wrong in taking the baby up when he cried!'

'I am sure 'twas a great condescension in a young lady like you to be after him, poor rogue! I thought he would have slept on a bit, or I would never have left you that trouble. I am ashamed a lady should look on them wrapped up in such rags, but since the Rector sold his horses away, my husband has often been weeks without work. Poor old gentleman! he never did like to spend away much, and now he has grown so childish, he clings to it the more mayhap, because he knows he can't have it long!'

No reply suggested itself to Clara. The poor woman probably thought a prolonged silence not courteous to her visitor, and she presently took up the thread of discourse herself again. 'We have a rare blessed lady come now; I am sure she is building us up such a place as will show any day by the side of the General's own cottages; and she will take a poor body's fancy as to where the oven lies handiest to come at, and such-like things, as if one were building a place for one's self. She turned in here the very day after she came to the Grange. I was sitting fretting, for I thought we were all coming to beggary; my husband had not had a

stroke of work for weeks, and we had spent away the money on bread, and I expecting the steward to be after the quarter's rent. It's often too much for me now when I think it all over again. I am sure if I didn't look twice to see whether she were not one of those blessed angels, for. she lightened one's road as if she had come right from above.'

Clara now began to feel a longing to clothe the mother as well as the children, and guesses rather than calculations passed through her mind as to whether her personal finances would cover the expenditure, for very vague were her ideas as to cost of material; little could she guess, with no experience to guide her, for how small a sum the ragged poor may be clothed, beneath the blessing of Him who makes wisdom available no less in the garmenting a child than in the 'saving a city.' Clara's compassion was chiefly called forth by the bare feet of the children, and when the poor woman's words of blessing on Mrs. Barrington died away, Clara achieved an observation,—

'Your children must catch bad colds without shoes!'

'O no, Miss; I should never fret for them till they came to hard work. 'Tis a deal safer to run about always with none, than those sloppering bits of old leather that only soak up the wet and keep it all in, when but for them their pretty feet might be dry—bless 'em! I love the sight of 'em, pattering about as pure as Heaven made 'em; if I had three times the coppers to look to, I would never hide 'em up; 'tis a decent bit of something to dress the poor dears up in I have a longing for. But I always say I will look first to

their feeding, even if I have to cover 'em up in an old bit of sack, for flesh and blood can't be bought when the money comes in, but a tight up garment may; and so, thank God, they have had bread day by day. But it's nearly two years now since I have bought a new rag for any one of us; only now I seem to see a cheering, to save us from beggary. Madam Barrington says we shall not perish for want of a hand's turn of work. My husband's been on some weeks now at the Grange.'

'I should like to try and make some clothing for that poor woman's children,' Clara said, after leaving the cottage, to Mrs. Barrington.

'I shall be most grateful to you, my dear, for such kindness, and I am sure the poor woman will.'

And Clara almost wondered at the fresh spring of interest and pleasure that had arisen, and was rising still, in her heart.

They crossed the little rushing river, and Mrs. Barrington said to Clara, 'I want to look after the progress of another dwelling; and if you will let me leave you on my way in a cottage close by, you might cheer a poor bed-ridden man by a visit, while I attend to my house building.'

'I am afraid I could not attempt that.'

'You need not be afraid of attempting, my love, because to attempt is to succeed. You have only to take a chair by the bed, speak a kind word, and, if he be disposed to listen, read a little to one who is ignorant of "the first principles of the oracles of God." You do not feel unwilling to show this kindness in passing to the poor sufferer, do you?'

'No, not unwilling; but I never have visited the poor.'

'If you are not unwilling, I will answer for the power,' replied Mrs. Barrington; and taking Clara into the cottage, she introduced her, and then putting into her hand the little Bible from her own bag, left her there alone with the weary man. He looked on Clara, rather in vague curiosity than interest. Clara had no idea of what to say, but she thought of Bill Briggen: she knew well where to find the words in the Bible that had lighted the "tempesting seas" to the fisherman; she knew, for they were the first words of inspiration on which her eyes had ever rested with interest and prayer; and silently now, as she looked on the sufferer before her, she prayed in her heart, 'O God, let this poor man see thy love!' and then, having offered to read, she opened the book, found the place, and began.

Clara read with deep feeling, for the emotion first called forth by that passage of Scripture still vibrated within her soul; she read with deep feeling, for the thought trembled within her, 'What if this poor man should see the Saviour, like Bill Briggen, and be happy?' and the concentration of a first effort held all else in suspense.

The bed-ridden man looked up and listened. The storm at sea; the Divine Saviour's eye on the little ship in its tossings, and, when the danger was greatest, His form on the waters; the terror because they thought him a spirit; the joy when they heard the voice they loved dearer than all, saying, "Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid!" and they safe, on calm waters with Him. No wonder the sick man's

attention was riveted; and when Clara had ended he said, 'It was splendid!' for he had been a gardener by trade, and 'splendid' was his highest word of praise for his flowers. Clara was encouraged, and ventured to tell of Bill Briggen; then the sick man's eyes swam with tears, and he looked up with a silent supplication to Heaven that had no knowledge how to breathe itself in words.

Mrs. Barrington returned. She put no question, but gave her hand to the poor man with a kind farewell; he, holding her hand, looked up in her face, and said, 'It was splendid!'

'I am sure it was,' said Mrs. Barrington; 'I think Miss North will come and see you again.' The poor man directed his eyes to Clara, who promised to do so, and they departed.

Anastasia and Laura soon met again at the pic-nic. Anastasia was on the watch to avoid Laura if possible, but this could by no possibility be done; the most public opportunity was chosen, and Laura began,—

'O Anastasia, that visit you paid to the Grange—my curiosity has been insatiable. Did you come to close quarters with Mrs. Barrington?'

Now Anastasia was by no means the brightest of the seniors that day, the shadow over her pathway perceptibly lengthened. Could she but have seen from whence that giant shadow fell, beneath which life's brightness grew dim, she might have found a way of escape from its presence; but in consequence of sitting at its feet, expecting every one to think of her, she too often found herself alone with the

shadow. Could she but have forgotten herself, and gone forth in every feeling to meet others, she would have left the giant shadow behind her; but on that pic-nic day it hung heavily, and she tried to evade Laura's familiar inquiry.

'Now do not attempt to disguise the fact, my dear Anastasia; I know Mrs. Barrington was in an ecstasy at your charities, only probably she avoids flattery, as I should.'

'She certainly kept clear of that,' replied Anastasia. 'I give every one leave to enjoy her as they like; I have had enough of attempts to be sociable.'

'You don't say so! Well, I confess I am not altogether surprised, for Mrs. Barrington looked to me very capable of effecting a decided snuff-out. I only wish I had been by to come to the rescue.'

'O, I am very much obliged to you, but I am quite capable of standing my own ground. I certainly expected more interest in my efforts and plans, but I undertook them for their own sake, and I am only where I was before.'

'Did Mrs. Barrington decline your invitation to inspect your school?'

'O, more than that! she threw cold water on the whole thing! She evidently adheres to some old-fashioned notions on education, which I suppose will live on in the background of society for a time.'

'No doubt: all of a piece with the whitewashed walls of the Grange! It is possible Mrs. Barrington suspected you of papering and painting the peasants' intellect, and preferring the primitive whitewash herself, she could not be

expected to sympathise: but did you not prevail on her to make at least one visit with you to the school, that she might see what its machinery was? Then you might have triumphed in a convert!'

'No, indeed, I have enough to do in planting new ideas in the ignorant, without spending time on the attempt to root out notions from minds that, with every aid to the contrary, have yet held them through life.'

'But did you try at no meeting-point except education? I am sure you gave in too soon! Do let me suggest to you a happier topic: I can discern a point on which you could not fail to coalesce in a moment.'

'Really, Laura, the stuff you talk is insufferable! I only hope Mrs. Barrington may "snuff out" your folly some day, for I have no patience with it!'

'Now, Anastasia, don't resent my solicitude! As for myself, I lie open to censure on every side; and now that you have stood firm, I shall not flinch; and to tell the truth, I am so inexpressibly weary of all the small shot of hints, gentle remonstrances, and friendly suggestions, that a good broadside, or even a moderate cannon-ball, would make a refreshing variety; particularly if fired off by the hand of decision, which secures the not leaving you existing as a mutilated fragment of your former self. When it comes, I hope it will be strong enough to snuff me out altogether! But now, do pronounce on which our starting-point shall be through this labyrinth of wood, for I see all our juniors look ready: we all elect you as our guide!'

Anastasia took the lead, and the merry troop followed, their light forms and bright garments lighting up the forest's dense shade; until Anastasia, still keeping the lead, found her feet suddenly swamped in a muddy morass. Laura rushed to the rescue, insisting on her not turning back, and protesting that it was 'only a hint as to Nature's preference for brown above black; a moment more and Nature herself would have brown-booted us all! Who could expect her to tolerate, without a reproof, the intrusion of black feet in her sacred domains. A little more running and the brown composition would take form and substance, and no inconvenience be felt!' So exhorted, Anastasia, with careful holding up of her long flowing dress, proceeded with praiseworthy good-humour, falling back now a little in the rear of the rest, Laura offering to act as her deputy—and take the risk of a total submersion in the next bog they came to.

'What lessons Nature teaches!' exclaimed Laura, as she seated herself on a gate-post far down in the wood, while most of her companions were seated around resting in the shade.

Antonia convinced that a personal application of the affair of the bog was about to follow, responded,—

'Wait until your oracular wisdom is called for, most practical philosopher; you are not yet elected to the chair as the only compendium of morality amongst us! I move that each voice should imitate the note of some bird, to see what compensation we can make for the absence of all the melody that greeted us in the spring. You second me, and begin.'

'Exquisite Antonia, a quietus from you is a rare compliment! Only allow me to say my intentions were innocent. If moral philosophy does not suit the occasion, I have also prepared a short discourse upon colour.'

But Antonia responded, 'A truce to discourses of all kinds, except they be given in the language of birds!'

Here Captain North broke in on the conference with the blackbird's clear, carolling whistle; Anastasia, whose voice had more power than any, was prevailed on to try the nightingale's song; Clara caught up some notes of the thrush, little Leonore gave the yellowhammer's short plaintive strain, while Antonia made the ring-doves low coo, and Laura persisted on coming in at intervals with the notes of the magpie; the rest of the party did their part in various degrees of perfection, and the failures and fun of the entertainment suited well with the demands of the case. But the low level of the sunbeams pointed out a return, and the evening shadows fell darkly before the merry wanderers escaped from the wood.

Not long after the pic-nic excursion, Mr. and Mrs. Astell and their daughter were invited to a party at the Hall. Mrs. Barrington was one of the guests, to Laura's entire satisfaction. The genuine warmth of Mrs. Barrington's heart, combined with her decision of character, and the beaming play of her intellect, completed the fascination which Laura had felt in her presence from the first, and through the whole evening Laura forgot her old sport in freely rendered admiration. After that evening she was restless

until she had prevailed on her mother to invite Mrs. Barrington to a select party at their house. Mrs. Barrington declined the invitation; and the spoilt child determined at once to give up caring for the being who had crossed her will and denied her wish.

CHAPTER XII.

In the autumn of this year Miss Keymer heard of a situation, which she felt held out a promising opening to her for the future. She had before yielded to Mrs. North's generous desire that she should remain with Leonore; but she now again expressed her feeling, and urged it as personally desirable to herself. This plea could not be refused; and Mrs. North gave her consent that Miss Keymer should offer herself as governess for an only child, whose parents were most anxious that Miss Keymer should undertake the charge. Mrs. North gave consent, but she did so with a look expressive of such heart-reluctance, that the faithful instructress of her children felt as if that look would for ever sweeten and endear to her the bitter parting from that home after so long a residence. Much was felt and said on the subject of Miss Keymer's departure; but those of her pupils who felt it the most were the two who had been least rigidly schooled, Leonore and Antonia.

A cloud now settled on Miss Keymer's countenance, and a weight lay at her heart: it was evident that to come and go was no business question to Miss Keymer. One day, as the time drew near for her departure, she asked Antonia to take a walk with her, and they set out together.

'Which way shall we turn?' asked Antonia.

'Let us go to the glade where I first went with you to copy the beech-tree,' Miss Keymer replied.

They walked silently some little way; then Antonia said,—

'I am so sorry you are going, Miss Keymer. I shall always miss you: so many pleasant hours and pleasant things are for life associated with you.'

Miss Keymer did not reply, and when Antonia looked she saw that her tears were falling fast. They reached the distant glade, and sat down on the turf in their old familiar place, in full sight of the tree. Then Miss Keymer observed,—

'How unchanged all looks!—and yet we, whose life must be eternal, how changed we are, since we sat here to draw that tree!'

Antonia did not at once reply. She waited, pondering thoughtfully, for she could not realise the fact of being herself much changed. Her thoughts and feelings had held the same ascending track; her life had flowed on in the same unselfish love; her acquirements had blended so naturally with herself, that she had not marked her own progress. She had still her deep sadness—of sorrows remembered and felt; she had, too, her trials, the same as before. Anastasia had not learned how to estimate aright, nor how to spare under a mistaken estimation. None of these things were changed, nor had her early brightness grown dim; it drew its light from "the Father of lights;" Antonia was fervent-

ly happy, and for a moment she wondered what Miss Keymer meant by change. But accustomed very quickly to pass from her own feelings into those of others, she soon caught what she fancied Miss Keymer's feeling must be. Miss Keymer had seen the nursery merged in the schoolroom, the schoolroom lost in the home, and her work was done; she had seen childhood flow on into youth, youth expand into womanhood: older life needed her not. No wonder that she felt, 'how changed!' Antonia's lips were parted to give expression to her sense of the feeling, when Miss Keymer, who did not look up, and therefore did not see her prepared to reply, spoke again,—

'It is not *changes* I so much feel, I know they must come to me. Eighteen years makes this seem like the home of a lifetime, but, of course, I have always lived expecting to go; but, O Antonia, I tell you the deep feeling of my heart when I say that I do not know how to lose sight of you, and that, perhaps, for ever!'

Antonia was taken by surprise; she could only press her hand on Miss Keymer's, she could not give words; and Miss Keymer went on,—

'I would not speak in flattery,—you know I am no flatterer, and least of all when I must soon take my farewell; but while I could have your presence I seemed to have something of Heaven always near. Now, when I lose you I can only *look up*, and all is indefinite, unreal to me *there*.'

'But, said Antonia, 'you need not *begin* with looking up.'

'What do you mean?' asked Miss Keymer, as she

raised her face in surprise at so unexpected a reply; for evermore in her heart she had silently thought on Antonia's *look* to the sky, and her breathing forth the word '*Heaven!*' Antonia was then only a child,—it surely must have been with her the *beginning!* Therefore she asked with surprise, 'What do you mean?'

'O, have you not,' answered Antonia, 'sometimes sat by the side of a calm sheet of water, and felt it a relief to look from the dazzling light of the summer sky down into its still depth, where the heavens lay softly mirrored, and the foliage around reflected its shadow from the heat? Such a glass is the Bible: all there lies undazzled in truest reflection, but softened and still, so that we may look long and intently down into its depths, until we have learned to know what the Heaven of Heavens is to us; and then, when we look up, we find our eye of faith is strengthened to penetrate the dazzling light, and see the things unseen before, and eternal!'

'Was it so, Antonia, that you learned?'

'Yes, indeed, it was. I looked often and long in the Bible on things written there, most wonderful and blessed; and then, when I *looked up*, I found I had a higher sight,—a sight that could behold the things of Heaven.'

'But would it be always so?'

'O, yes! because it is written, "The entrance of Thy word giveth light."'

'I fear it could not come to me as it came to you; my eyes are weary and dim with the cares and the tears of earth.'

'Then, indeed, it is just waiting for you, because it is "the weary" whom Christ bids to come.'

'But you were not weary, Antonia?'

'No, I found it in childhood; but, oh, it must be worth while to be weary for the sake of all that is said to the weary alone!'

'But my eyes have been filled with other objects for a lifetime, and I fear it would be *very long* before they could get rid of earthly things enough to look on Heaven.'

'We must not measure *time* when we act for *eternity*. If it took all that remains to us here, still it would be but as one day to a thousand years—a little moment to an everlasting for ever. But you will not have to lose sight of the things of earth; you will see them more clearly than before, only you will see them in a light shining above and beyond them,—the light of Heaven; the light of Eternity, instead of the fading light of Time.'

'O Antonia, I cannot feel that my eyes will ever see in that light!'

'You cannot realise it until you have it, because it is not of us, it is the gift of God; but it is His own word,—"the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." If we will believe His own word, and seek it there until we find it, we cannot "seek in vain."'

'How you must love the Bible, if it has given this light to you!'

'Yes, indeed, I do; but not for its *light* alone.'

'For what more?'

'O, for its love!—because it loves me more than I can ever love it. As soon as we get to be one with it, then it

meets every feeling; shows that it understands every secret thought; cares for our every difficulty, sorrow, or want; has some certain direction—some balm—some promise, according to our need. And then, above all things, it is always bringing home to one's heart the forgiveness of sins. O, you will find it loves you as nothing else on earth can! You will never feel left alone,—never uncomforted, unmet, while you have that to speak to you; you will find it has provided for every step of your way, until it sees you safe in at Heaven's gate. Will you not love it?'

'I will look into it as I never have yet,—long, intently, and with prayer. If I find it *loves me*, then, dear Antonia, I must for ever bless you.'

'O, you will bless God! The faint ray shining through me will be lost in the sense of His love.'

When the day of parting came, Miss Keymer's self-command did not give way, until, last of all, she took leave of Antonia. The General and Mrs. North were both present. The time when the orphan Antonia made her first trial in the schoolroom, rose freshly before them. This parting scene, as a sequel to all that went before, was a lesson for hearts thoughtful as theirs: it witnessed of things unseen and eternal,—of an influence whose source was above—of a love whose ascendancy was supreme. Antonia pressed a little parcel silently into Miss Keymer's hand, who, without venturing to look back upon the friends and associations of years, stepped into the carriage, and was gone. When she opened her packet, she found in it a Bible. It was beauti-

ful as a book; and how beautiful now, as it seemed to her the secret of the loveliness investing Antonia,—the hope of changeless blessing for herself! She pressed it to her lips, and took it as a sacred gift from above.

The autumn passed away, and the winter's frost set in, but no snow-flake, no cold wintry rain, could penetrate the warmly-built cottages—pictures of the English peasant's home—scattered among the fields where the villagers laboured on the Roger-de-Lee estate. The open door revealed the cottage life within to the passer-by with freedom's fearlessness, conveying to the eye a sense of home life that, perhaps, no other land can impart. Built up of stone from the hills, with a single lining of bricks to keep them from damp, latticed windows that opened with a casement, thatched roof, and a porch at the door,—such were the warm, sheltering nests of the poor, on which, when the winter winds blew round the old moated Grange, Mrs. Barrington's thoughts turned with comfort, as the homes of those whom the Maker of all men had intrusted to her care.

Clara did not lose her lately-awakened interest. When a feeling was once fairly planted within her heart, she did not readily relinquish it; the difficulty was to plant it there, because the whole surface of her life was crowded and pressed with other things. The delight of the poor woman in her replenished wardrobe, and the seeing her little family in decent apparel,—this we need not depict; the feelings of the giver and receiver can be well imagined. It became a pleasure to Clara to call at that cottage,—to sit within it

and watch all with interest, and listen to all that the poor woman or the children would say to her. Nor was the bedridden sufferer ever forgotten by her. On her second visit to him, he seemed to have lost the impression of the narrative she had before read to him. When Clara alluded to it, he only remarked, 'I never knowed anything of seafaring ways, and now it is very certain I never shall.' The Divine love of the history had faded from his still darkened heart, and the scene was not one his mind could familiarly retain. Clara for a moment thought all was over; she felt as if she had nothing except Bill Briggen to fall back upon, and that was at an end. But when we are treading the pathway of love, in hope to guide the wandering steps of another, or ease the rough way to weary feet, there is One who will meet us, and give us in that hour what we shall say and what we shall speak. Clara felt too much at a loss to look up for guidance; but He, who is always at hand in the pathway of mercy, looked down upon her, and met the occasion with the thought that was wanted. Clara had made herself acquainted with the Bible, and it now occurred to her, in her despair, to read from the Gospel of St. Luke of the fruit-tree bearing no fruit, that was to be tended with all the gardener's care for one year more, and all to be well if it bore fruit, but if still it bore none it must then be cut down. This came home to the heart of the *gardener*, as a fact quite familiar. Clara thought he would want it explained, and did not exactly know how to attempt it; but the poor man looked up with solemn feeling, and said,—

'That's cutting to hear! God have mercy on me!' which showed the Word had been a light as it fell.

And so from that day Clara chose out scenes of Nature from the page of inspiration, and the one link of knowledge by which the poor man could realise them opened his mind to retain what he heard; until his heart, softened by the dew of God's blessing, began to receive it abidingly. He listened until he loved, he loved until he knew what he loved, and was filled with joy and peace in believing; for "the record God has given," is such, that "the wayfaring man though a fool shall not err therein."

Anastasia had more than once wondered what Laura could have meant when she said, at the pic-nic, that she had discerned a point on which herself and Mrs. Barrington could not fail to coalesce! The sense which broke upon her at the moment, that Laura was making sport, had faded away in the more permanent feeling of curiosity. It was, at all events, as well to know what Laura did mean, if she had been only in sport it would confirm the impression of the moment; but Laura certainly was clever, and with nothing to occupy her, except the making observations on others; she might have discovered some point in common, and it would certainly be more agreeable to feel some decided congeniality of mind with Mrs. Barrington; so, at all events, Anastasia would sift out what Laura meant. When a convenient opportunity of private conference offered she repeated her former expression of feeling, she must say, as regarded Mrs. Barrington, she had had enough of attempts to be sociable.

Laura caught the clue in a moment.

'I think you are premature; there might be points, and no doubt there are, on which you and Mrs. Barrington might assimilate at once, proving a mutual profit and pleasure.'

'I cannot tell what your acuteness may have discovered, Laura, I certainly have not found any meeting point yet.'

'My dear Anastasia, I freely offered you the benefit of my discoveries at the pic-nic, and you rejected my aid with resentment!'

'No, not resentment; but what is it that you think you have discovered?'

'Think! it is no deduction of thought, but matter-of-fact observation!'

'But what is it, Laura?'

'Why, is it not self-evident that you and Mrs. Barrington are both of one mind in leading others usefully on? Exactly what you aim at, and have all along aimed at, with the daughters of your Rector, Mrs. Barrington achieved for Clara; look at Clara's new interest in life and judge! Try Mrs. Barrington on that point, and you must find one attempt sufficient!'

Anastasia was always naturally gratified when any step she had already taken proved the ascent to influence with others. In the blindness of self-approval she believed success was before her, and determined to follow up Laura's hint. And Laura's triumph rose high.

It was some time before any opening appeared. In the course of a few weeks, however, Mrs. Barrington called when

Anastasia only was at home. Now Anastasia had not failed to observe, that the other members of her family seemed able to venture anything with Mrs. Barrington, in fact, this recent resident had become more intimate in her home than any other friend in the circle around them; and she began to attribute her own failure to a want of more assurance and independence on her part,—an unhappy, but not an uncommon mistake; the truth being that she had far too much self-assurance, carrying her on without any careful study of the feelings and judgment of others. Under this delusion, Anastasia received Mrs. Barrington's morning visit. There would have been a grace in waiting to see whether Mrs. Barrington was disposed to lead the conversation, but Anastasia was generally too much occupied with her own plans and ideas for this. She quickly introduced a subject which she concluded must be a suitable one to begin with; addressing some close inquiries to Mrs. Barrington with reference to the aged incumbent of 'the Alps.' Mrs. Barrington had taken from the first a great interest in the old Rector, expressed by every kind and respectful attention. Anastasia knew this, and supposed that her personal inquiries must be acceptable, as an evidence of like interest. But the feeling of Mrs. Barrington's deep and tender spirit was one widely apart from Anastasia's investigating inquiries; the dross of self in poor Anastasia tarnished all the fine gold of native refinement of mind, and mingled its alloy with all she might otherwise have received pure from Heaven; she had, therefore, no conception of that delicacy of inquiry without which minds of

elevated tone cannot admit either close personal or relative inquiry. Mrs. Barrington spoke respectfully and with evident feeling of the aged Rector, but avoided personal detail, turning aside all pointed interrogation. Nothing silenced, Anastasia pursued her subject.

'I must confess, Mrs. Barrington, I am at a loss to understand why you bestow so much time and kind consideration on that childish old man, while yet you keep aloof from the Rector of this parish, who is really, and so is his family, most kind-hearted and open to influence! I have longed to interest you on their behalf, I should really hope for great benefit from a little intercourse with you, if you were willing to cultivate their society?'

Mrs. Barrington replied,—

'I do not wonder that such distinctions should sometimes raise a question in your mind, but when you have had more experience in life you will perhaps discover that there are some individuals whom we may best influence, or rather perhaps best avoid deceiving, by keeping apart from their society.'

'I do not see it,' Anastasia said, 'to be so in this case, at all events: the whole family are so amiable! they seem only to want a little leading on, to make them really actively useful; but, unfortunately, Papa is so downright, that I seldom like to press their coming, for he is not one to lead people on!'

'I fear it is not "leading on," but turning straight back, that some people want; and if so, the more downright the dealing with them the better.'

'Yes, but even then so much depends on the way things are done, and in kindly cultivating their society, an influence may be exercised from which much might be hoped.'

'I am sorry to discourage your kind feeling, but the self-sufficient are quite beyond my poor attempts. A higher Hand must humble, I believe, before we can make any well-directed attempt to lead them on; they must learn their first lesson from Him who directs us to walk humbly with our God.'

'I really do not see that this end will be better accomplished by our standing aloof.'

'No, I see we do not view the subject in the same light, and I do not know how to make my meaning plain to you, except by saying, that in cultivating the society of the self-satisfied, unless we are in a position to put the truth plainly before them, and to affix to it a personal appeal, our friendly intercourse with them would, it might be feared, help to build up their self-deception. None are so insensible to all indirect influence as the self-satisfied.'

At this point Anastasia felt some personal excuse necessary, and responded, 'I, of course, am not in a position to speak openly, I am always received with kindness at the Rectory; I cultivate the acquaintance in hope of conciliating, and the consequence is, I am aided in following out my own plans for the poor."

'I can quite suppose you would feel a great difficulty in any direct appeal against the awful fact of preaching those truths to others, of which the preacher's life denies the personal power; but you must remember that if you allow your

intercourse to exceed what courtesy demands, you then place yourself voluntarily under the sacred obligations of friendship; to cultivate a friendship, and yet refrain from being faithful, is a fearful position to occupy.'

'I really cannot see it in the light in which you place it.'

Tenderly then Mrs. Barrington looked on Anastasia, and, in a tone of earnest solicitude, said to her, 'May it not be possible that you are hindered from seeing the subject in this light, because you have already viewed it in another, and know not how to relinquish your own view. May it be possible that *self* is your hinderance also?'

It was a startling inquiry. The depth and almost trembling earnestness of feeling in which it was asked would, to some hearts, have softened it all into tenderness; but truth is strong, and not finding an entrance, it shook Anastasia's whole spirit; it was not allowed to penetrate; it was rejected in a tone of wounded pride and almost resentment. Mrs. Barrington, with the same gentle firmness, responded, 'I found it so deceitful a foe that I often despaired of escape from its tyranny; but there is One who searches the heart, and He can enlighten our spirit to act as His candle, bringing to our view our every real motive and feeling. Let me entreat you to ask Him that He would do so for you!'

But Anastasia could not be won. Mrs. Barrington, seeing it was hopeless, turned the conversation and soon took her leave.

Anastasia shed tears of vexation and annoyance; countless were the troubled questions that passed through her

mind, but comparatively faint and few were the supplications that she offered to Heaven for the secret evil to be discovered and overcome; the work could only be a great one, and she was not willing to consent to "the violent taking by force" which a long-seated usurper requires. Had she but in reality possessed the spirit of "a little child," which in word she professed, how different might all her after-life have become; but self in her would not humble its pride, and therefore its shadow grew larger and darker above her. The earnest appeal had been made to her, the faithful warning had been given, that 'open rebuke which is better than secret love' had not been withheld, but she saw not its rare costliness, she felt not its value. She had turned from the searching of truth, and the personal appeal was never again sent home to her heart.

CHAPTER XIII.

Mrs. Barrington, with her usual consideration for all that could add to the pleasure or comfort of those around her, had suggested that the aged Rector of 'the Alps' should be drawn up to the Grange in his chair, that he might sit in the cool shade of the lofty pines, and feel the refreshment of a daily change of scene. The variety had pleased him, and he always looked for it at the usual hour. He never seemed weary of his seat on the lawn; he often appeared to be gazing around on the distant landscape, though probably his dim eyes could scarcely define the beautiful expanse; or he watched the gentle life around him—the gardener watering the opening flowers, the butterfly and bee sipping the honey-dew, and the majestic tread of the St. Bernard dog who sometimes paced slowly by, but who never noticed the aged guest. The soft murmur of the breeze through the forest boughs, or the sweep of the summer wind as it rose with a rushing swell, the mighty music of the woods, seemed all alike to him. What he saw, what he heard, no one knew; he sat motionless and helpless, a living being lingering in a world on which he once might have breathed an enduring blessing, on which he now appeared to gaze in vacancy: it was a mournful sight. It was not the weary labourer, rest-

ing his active spirit after the burden and heat of the day, before it rose on wings, as an eagle, to enter into the joy of its Lord.—Alas! no charity could hope that it was that. The aged pastor had never known what it was to 'break up the fallow ground, to sow in righteousness, and reap in mercy.' Nor was it the gentle existence of one whom reason never blest, the infant life prolonged through threescore years and ten, waiting its summons to lay down the soul's dark prison-house, to ascend a disembodied, emancipated spirit, to behold and rejoice in the Divine love that had provided for its irresponsible being a cloudless, blissful eternity;—it was not this. What it was, each one who looked on him was left to infer. Day after day, in the course of those long quiet hours, Mrs. Barrington would bring her little camp-stool to his side, and opening her Bible, read to him from the sacred page, pausing sometimes, and sometimes reading over again the words that are "spirit and life," if, peradventure, now at even-tide it might be light. He would turn and look at her, and sometimes, as she read, the tears rolled down his furrowed cheeks. Did they only flow from the weakness of age, or might they be the tears of repentance? There was no voice, nor any to answer; the silver cord was loosened, the power of utterance gone. When Mrs. Barrington left his side he followed her parting steps with a troubled look; but this passing expression of feeling soon faded again into vacancy. When the damp mists of autumn rendered this daily change unsafe, the aged Rector quickly sank away, the golden bowl was broken, the spirit returned to God who gave it.

From the time when the beloved Alpine cure thus became vacant, Captain North's anxious heart pleaded with Heaven in its behalf. A few weeks passed quietly over the forsaken Rectory, the new-made grave, and then a note from Mrs. Barrington requested a visit from Captain North on important business. He entertained no question as to what the subject might be—it must, it could be but one—the new appointment to the Alpine church. He walked to the old moated Grange, deeply pondering. Hill and valley all lay smiling in the last parting glory of autumn; the woods almost leafless, but a warm light over all, breathing its radiance over Nature's decay, as if sealing it up in love before the chill blasts of winter set in for their day, until spring again should bring warmth and life. He looked on the land in its loveliness, and felt how unconscious it all lay around, unmindful whether the feet of its coming pastor might indeed prove the feet—how beautiful upon its mountains!—of one bringing good tidings, publishing peace, bringing good tidings of good, publishing salvation. He lifted his eyes from that landscape to Heaven; no prayer could he utter in that anxious hour, but the look was supplication. Little could the outward eye have discovered the weight of thought borne by that buoyant step, as the soldier ascended the hill and entered the old moated Grange.

Mrs. Barrington received him in her private sitting-room, her countenance expressing the feeling that reigns under a sense of the highest responsibility.

'You, doubtless, have guessed the subject upon which I

desire to consult you this morning. I have during these past weeks been most anxiously weighing the question as to whether I could fix upon any individual to whom I could with fullest confidence offer the spiritual charge of this long-neglected parish. I have arrived at the conclusion, that I know not one (free to accept it) to whom I could unhesitatingly make the offer; my first inquiry now must be made of you. I feel persuaded, from the intimate acquaintance of past months, that I might trust your faithfulness in the responsible act of selecting a pastor for this parish; therefore before I inquire of any other, I wish to ask, Do you know the man whom you could desire, for the work's sake, to see appointed to this place?'

Firmly and thankfully the soldier answered, 'I do.'

It was a beautiful thing at that moment to see how the expression of Mrs. Barrington's countenance, which had been surcharged with deep anxiety, lighted as the answer was given. Well she knew what it was to be able to repose trust in another; hers was no hasty confidence of friendship's kindly feeling, but the deep assurance resulting from knowledge of the character of the one in whose judgment she confided. The fact of the transferred presentation was signed from the moment of that trustworthy 'I do.' But some hours passed away in conference on the subject before the shadow of the soldier fell on the hill-side again.

At length his steps were turning home; he longed to tell there the hope that filled his heart, and yet he lingered; he looked on valley, and cottage, and hill, and the silent, unut-

terable language of that look told the tidings of blessing The village lay smiling in its beauty and its brightness as before, as unconscious now of the hope as before of the fear. The soldier climbed to a little cleft in the hills; it was a long familiar spot, it had been the haunt of his childhood. At each call of the service to which his youth was devoted he had taken his last look of the 'Alpine' village from that point; there, since his return, he had often sat on a rude ledge of stone in meditative thought—such thought as surely one day will be found to have been prayer. And now he turned aside to this sanctuary of nature, where the village lay below at his feet, and the church in its peaceful repose stood beside the Rectory on a neighbouring hill. He ascended and stood there, with an earnest of the feeling of the long-expected herald who shall get him up into the high mountain —it may be, Mizpah's highest point—and lifting up his voice, tell to Judah the tidings of good! The soldier lifted no voice, but he looked in silent love upon the scene, where Hope at length had lighted down, folding her weary wing in the repose of assurance. Then taking his rude seat of stone, he drew forth the little worn Prayer-book that had been, together with his Bible, the pocket-companions of his youth of service, and, opening its pages, read the Gospel and Epistle for St. John the Baptist's day, as breathing best the feeling of the moment. And as he read the words that told of facts and feelings, the same to-day as in that yesterday of long-ago, when first the prophet uttered them, his spirit rose on the full tide of inspiration's thrilling song until every feeling

blended in the sense of expectation's joy. Nor was the inspired address to the holy Baptist, "And thou, child," unmeet on this occasion, for the one to whom the pastoral charge was to be offered was still in his youth. Then descending the steep face of the hill, the soldier hastened home with the tidings of joy.

Captain North had felt no hesitation in returning for answer the declaration, 'I do.' He had watched with great interest the course of a younger brother of one of his own military friends. A year or two younger than himself, he had felt for him an elder brother's generous tenderness as a boy; he had watched him with increasing interest through his college career, contending successfully for the University's highest honours; had seen him then turn from the field of intellectual competition and victory "to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, preaching the acceptable year of the Lord." Captain North had once hoped that this young friend, Edward Seymour, would some day occupy their own family living, but that hope had now long passed away; never had his expectation rested on the Alpine cure; but a day, an hour, almost a moment, had laid the lowly village in the youthful pastor's path. Would he feel called of God to receive the charge, or would he pass it by, leaving it to some other heart to accept the sacred trust? The Captain felt no doubt on this question, and the reply gave the seal to his hopes. It was a call from Heaven, and the unquestioning response was, 'I come.'

It was not long before Edward Seymour paid a few days'

visit to his friend Captain North, that he might look upon his already accepted parish, and be introduced to the patroness. On the morning following his arrival, after spending an hour alone with his friend, they set out together to visit the Alpine village. They made their way direct to the church. Captain North called as they passed for the massive key of the door, he unlocked the portal, the heavy old door, that had been thrown back to receive generation after generation, opened once again on a pastor whose step had never crossed its threshold before; and with the thrill of a hallowed, trembling awe, the soldier of war and the minister of peace entered the earthly courts of the King eternal, immortal, invisible; the one as presenting, the other as accepting, the charge of those courts for a lifetime. It was a moment of unutterable feeling to both. In one, the reaction from hope, long deferred, now suddenly unfolding in promise beyond all that, for this parish, had been asked or thought; in the other the overwhelming solemnity of the first early acceptance of the sole charge of immortal souls, to "feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." They lingered on in the stillness of the sacred fane, while thought crowded upon thought, and feeling pressed on feeling. What had been there? Alas! the form without the Spirit. What now was there? A pastor's vacant place, his sands of life run out, his great account made up and given in. What would be there? this was the question now. The youthful scholar knew that classic honours were no surer aid to his most high and holy ministry, than were the riches

of the throne of David to the son he left to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. He could but kneel in the almost more than earthly stillness of the village church's aisles, and, as the young King at Gibeon, ask and say, "O Lord, my God, I am but a little child, I know not how to go out or to come in, and Thy servant is in the midst of Thy people, give therefore Thy servant an understanding heart!" Then as silently he mused in thought and feeling almost overwhelming, the words of Zechariah iii. flowed like the river of the water of life, through his soul, calming all his fevered pulses. He, in a happier sense than the prophet of Moab, "heard the words of God, and saw the vision of the Almighty." The high-priest standing before the Angel of the covenant, clothed in filthy garments, and Satan at his right hand to resist him; the high-priest's attitude of silent expectant waiting; the only voice the voice of Jesus, rebuking the adversary for His servant's sake, claiming him as His, by choice and by redemption; the taking from him all iniquity, the clothing him with change of raiment, the adorning him with the gifts necessary for his high ministry; the charge delivered to him, the promise given; the only means by which that charge could be fulfilled, even by the Lord his Redeemer being set always before him, and the final result, an influence of heavenly love uniting all around! It was enough; his early faith had cast anchor in the Divine Word, it had staid him through all the rough waves, all the deceitful calms of childhood and youth, it had held him unwavering when he knelt to take his ministerial vows, it upheld him now in this hour of first entrance

into that village where his testimony was to be "a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death," to the souls whom he voluntarily received as his charge. And now, with a brow calm and unclouded he passed from the old porch, along the churchyard path, between the graves of the departed. Once he stopped for a moment, as near the chancel end of the church a newly-made grave met his eye; no mound was raised above it, it seemed waiting a monumental stone. Edward Seymour asked, but asked as though he knew untold, 'Whose grave is that?'

'The late Rector's!' replied his friend.

'O North! when I, too, lie sleeping there, when to me the night is come wherein no man can work, what will my record be on high?' But the shudder of feeling passed again in a moment; it could not retain its hold on a spirit panoplied in the whole armour of God. Then, turning from the churchyard, they wound their way through the valley's depths, crossed the river, and climbed the hill to the old moated Grange. The villagers looked out from their cottage-doors, and the labourers turned to gaze after them as they passed, for they thought that "mayhap it might be the new parson." In truth, any stranger or friend might have looked in interest on the two. The soldier, with his light firm tread, as regular as music's measure; his figure all nervous energy and pliant ease, ready, it seemed, at the next step, to climb the facing of the rock, or mount the scaling-ladder for assault; the pastor's less elastic, more meditative pace,—not braced in muscle, or in form, to the spring of

swift effective motion, but his brow resolved and calm, looking as if he walked the earth—not at the first signal to rush on and bear down the foe before him, but in the might of Heaven to pause as human beings drew around, and raise his hands and bless. Such were the two as they passed on, and entered the old ivy-mantled Grange. They spent a considerable time in earnest conversation with Mrs. Barrington, and returned at length to the Hall, not without some exhaustion after the day's excitement. They were glad of an hour's solitude and repose before the family assembled for dinner.

Edward Seymour found himself seated by Miss North, a fact which rendered silence on the subject of deepest interest an absolute impossibility. The strain had been great that day, and to have led his mind into a somewhat different channel, would certainly have been a relief; but Miss North always seemed persuaded that interest, sympathy, and help, were best rendered by closely canvassing facts and feelings in every case that might be pressing; very naturally, because it was her own preference in similar circumstances, and she therefore only judged another's preference by her own. She was led into the mistake by never attempting to discover the feeling of others, but applying her own remedy to every individual. The consequence was, that confidence continually ebbed from her side, but though she sometimes felt the effect, she had no idea of the cause; it was one of the offshoots from "the root of bitterness" which she made no permanent effort to cast out from her heart. Edward Seymour had maintained all day his own high sense of the

Divine Call, the Ministry, and the Blessing before him; he had not questioned, he had not doubted, and his very fear had been absorbed in his soul-sustaining affiance in his God —but for this he had hardly been upheld through the intense feeling of the day. He had joined the evening circle too weary for longer actual weighing of the subject: but satisfied and calmly assured, reposing on Heaven. When, therefore, his wearied spirit's rest was invaded by Anastasia's "common-places" of religious expression, and he was laid under the necessity of response to all that suggested itself to her mind as most bearing on the subject, he vainly addressed himself to the task; the shallowness, the quick succession, and the bareness of her remarks and suggestions, bore down his spirit to earth, diverted its upward glance, and led it back to the arena of contesting feelings; its light was obscured, and its power of repose paralysed, until he gradually lapsed into a gloomy and unresponsive silence. Other guests were staying at the house, which, increasing the number at the dinner-table, had rendered general conversation a hopeless attempt; so Anastasia was left free to lay down her views, and Edward Seymour compelled to endure them. When Anastasia left the dining-room, she looked back on the hour spent there with much satisfaction; she had kept the conversation on profitable points, and she hoped that good might be the result. But Anastasia forgot that it is the "word spoken in *due season*" that alone is "good." She had yet to learn what it was to have her ear "wakened morning by morning," to a quick perception of the heart's

beating pulses around her, before she would be one of those who "know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary."

In the course of the evening General North asked his son how matters had gone off at the Grange?

'O, well enough in the end; but I chafed myself into a fever, and all to no purpose, because Seymour did not, I thought, show off to advantage, but sat on as much at his ease as in his own study, and never rose up to the point of acknowledgment which I expected and thought due, only saying something about his sense of the confidence reposed in his friend; but after all my anxiety, before we left, you might have supposed the Patroness and Rector felt the mutual confidence of years.'

'That's well, then,' replied the General, 'and you may rest assured that when you have done your part in bringing distances near, you must leave the collision to itself; that must take its natural course, and abide the issue.'

As the evening wore on Edward Seymour still found it impossible to rally; his spirit had been dragged down, and its weariness kept it in the dust; he saw only images of a pastor's new-made grave, of a people untaught, of death-beds unlighted by hope, until, benumbed in feeling, one of two alternatives became necessary, either to turn away to a solitude of exhaustion and doubt, or to breathe out to another the burden within. His eye glanced over the room in inquiry, and rested on Antonia's face bright in repose; he had talked with her at breakfast that morning, and felt inclined

to turn to her in hope of a congenial spirit; he soon made his way to her side.

'You know this Alpine parish well, I suppose?'

'No, not well; my cousin Harry knows it best.'

'Ah! I don't want him to-night, he takes cities by assault, and could only pity the weakness that trembles at the pastoral care of a village.'

'No, he would not merely pity! he knows too well the infinite difference between things temporal and things eternal.'

'It is "INFINITE!"' replied Edward Seymour, and he sat reflectingly silent, as though the admission of the burden had given an instant degree of power to contemplate it. At length he said again, 'I am ready to wonder how I ever ventured on ordination vows, making all drawing-back impossible, they hang about me now with a weight almost insupportable!'

Antonia turned her deep eyes of sympathy on the speaker, and replied earnestly, 'Could you not find relief by standing a moment in thought on Gennesareth's shore?' She paused, as hesitating to add more, expecting her meaning to be understood, but Edward Seymour still only listened, so she went on, 'The voice that there spoke the first, highest call to the Ministry, in only those two blessed words, "*Follow Me!*"'

It was enough; for her words called freshly to view that holiest and loveliest of Nature's peaceful scenes, the shores of the blue Lake of Galilee; the fishermen Peter and Andrew, James and John, mending their nets, the Divine Son of Man passing by, choosing them for His messengers of mercy, and including every personal requirement in the one

blessed charge " Follow Me ! " The scene of nature, diverting the mental eye, gave relief to the mind ; the simplicity of the Divine charge restored repose to the spirit. It was the Divine Word that had raised and invigorated ; Antonia's wisdom consisted in waking that heavenly harmony. She had an instant reward, she saw that the load was lightened in that glance to the Chief Shepherd, that echo of His call, " Follow Me ! "

Edward Seymour joined the seniors of the party, his changed aspect was not unobserved, but none knew that it had been wrought by a whisper of Heaven, by one look from the burdens of earth to the Lord of all power and might.

CHAPTER XIV.

Edward Seymour did not lose the vision of heavenly repose. He rested that night on the shores of the Lake of Tiberias; his thoughts reposed on the natural features of the scene, and his spirit in the blessed companionship of those simple fishermen and their Divine Master, 'whose gentleness it was that made them great.' He entered on the coming day refreshed and strengthened, equal to the encounter with whatever might present itself; those who find their rest in the Redeemer's peace-giving presence, find in that rest a renewal of strength.

Captain North had an engagement which he said would occupy the greater part of the morning. Anastasia hearing this, availed herself of the opportunity to request Mr. Seymour to visit her school. Mrs. Barrington had promised to join them at dinner, which made Anastasia additionally anxious to traverse the educational field before any opposing views might be introduced. It was everything that the new Alpine Rector should have a perfectly unprejudiced view of her school. She conducted him to it through the gardens as being a pleasanter way, and also to give time for a few preliminary remarks.

'I really feel your visit to my school, Mr. Seymour, quite a favour and personal encouragement, for I am obliged to work on with little or no manifestation of interest from others.'

'Indeed! that is not usual; education is so much the fashion of the day.'

'Yes; but you see the fact is, my school is in advance of the neighbourhood. I have the pioneer's work; when the way is prepared, others may be glad enough to follow. I did, indeed, hope for countenance from Mrs. Barrington, but I fear you will have something to contend with there, for she entirely objects to this throwing open the gates of knowledge to all,—the happy achievement of the present day, and my humble, but, as I said before, solitary effort here.'

Mr. Seymour only replied,—

'I have yet to learn Mrs. Barrington's views on the subject of education.'

'Then let me advise you to avoid all collision with her, and act from the first independently. You will have hard work enough as it is, for the farmers are all set against education; afraid, I suppose, of their cow-boys being wiser than themselves. I have much to contend with, but I will gladly allow any children from the "Alps" to continue in my school and others to come, as long as it may be agreeable to you. I have an admirable mistress.'

'Have you any of your children yet in service in the village?'

'No, not in the village; the farmers, you see, really spite the school, and, most unfortunately, they are quick enough

to find out that papa looks coldly upon it, which is quite enough for tenants any day; this will make your kind encouragement invaluable, for I really have to row against wind and tide!'

'What becomes of your children, then, if they find no places here?'

'O, happily, the poor children learn to aspire, and look above the milk-pail and the plough! If it were not for this, I think the whole work must have come to a stop. You would scarcely believe it, but all the farm-house servants in this parish are taken from other parishes, where there are no schools in any way equal to mine; and the few lads who have entered on farm-service are never long with their masters.'

'Then the results have not been very happy as yet?'

'No, not as regards the *farmers*, but they really must be left to take their chance: the poor children are my care; all my girls look, more or less, for teachers' situations in schools, or become dress-makers, milliners, or wish for places as ladies' maids, or to wait on children, and so get off to the town; and the boys are capable of shopmen's places, and some even of something higher.'

'And do you think this "aspiring," as mentally or physically healthful for them as the rosy milk-maid's or the hearty plough-boy's place of service?'

'I think it a token of the increase of mental power. But here is the school, and I flatter myself you will bestow your encouragement upon it.'

Before them stood the rows of neatly-dressed children;

for a moment they bowed and curtsied, and then the hum of learning commenced again, not more than a moment could be spared.

'Mr. Seymour, you will like to test the children's knowledge? Children, form a class! Children, we will begin with things SECULAR. What is the meaning of the word Secular?'

'Not spiritual.'

'Right! Mrs. Boniface, let the children go through the European capes.'

And the little villagers, embosomed in one of England's wooded valleys, a long day's swift journey from sea, or promontory, bay, or headland, went through, by dint of a remarkable effort of memory, every cape encircling the world's European quarter. While from each young eye the gentle calm, so natural to rural life, was gone, as each looked eager for the little neighbour to forget, that his or her place might be taken as a trophy of attainment; and those who had no eager anxiety looked stupid in the hopelessness of such unnatural recollection. The European capes were ended. Mrs. Boniface paused. Miss North looked at Mr. Seymour. The children took the opportunity of exchanging a few hard words, because one had been too quick on another, and the one at no loss had not given a moment for consideration to the one whose memory was not quite so retentive. Mr. Seymour bowed slightly. Arithmetic followed, then grammar. History followed grammar; and so these village children, born to cultivate the land around them like one bright garden, to tend the cattle of the field, and in such occupation find a liv-

ing interest; to look up to the holy Heaven above their hills and valleys, and learn from their Creator's word the path to reach that sinless home; these simple rustics must be drilled in learning's school, have every mental faculty forced, and all power and interest concentrated in rival competition; the tendency of which was to unfit them for their native calling, and to send them with a vagrant intelligence to add their counterfeit knowledge to the current market of towns and cities!

Then, as time was advancing, Miss North whispered a hint to Mrs. Boniface, who instantly drew up a whole class at full chase on some secular subject, and exclaimed,—

'Children! Old Testament prophecies.'

But at this Mr. Seymour interposed,—

'Not all in a breath, I entreat! Let us make some distinction.'

Miss North did not look pleased at so unexpected a remonstrance; but, by way of meeting it, shouted,—

'Children, sing a hymn!'

The children sang a hymn with an eye on the auditors to see what effect the performance produced. The same order as before was issued the moment the hymn was concluded, but Mr. Seymour again interposed,—

'May I be allowed to change the subject?'

'Certainly, sir,' said Mrs. Boniface, 'if it be to one they know.'

'Come, my children,' said Edward Seymour, with his accent and look of intensest repose, 'you are tired with all this long standing; you can sit down, if you like. I want

you not to try any longer one against another, but each one think, gently, of some text from the Bible that you love, and say it to me. Any one of you may begin.'

All silent.

'I want you to tell me some text of the Bible that you think of at your work, to make you diligent; or at your play, to make you kind,—some text you think of when you see the very old people, or the sick, or the hungry. . . . Well, then, some text about the flowers,—some text about Heaven!'

But all was in vain. The children looked to Mrs. Boniface, who said,—

'They are not used to exactly that way, you see, sir; but they will give you all the dates of the principal events in the Bible,—genealogies, order of the kings, or the types and antitypes; also on certain subjects, such as truth and lying. Children,' continued Mrs. Boniface, 'texts on truth.'

One or two were rapidly repeated to Mrs. Boniface's approval. Then a thoughtful-looking child began,—

'Prov. vii. 7, "For my mouth shall speak truth."'

But Mrs. Boniface interposed with a hasty—

'No! sit down!' and another started up with a different text. Mr. Seymour, however, suspended the last speaker to inquire why the former was silenced. 'Wrong reference, sir,' replied Mrs. Boniface, with some little satisfaction in her tone at knowing more than the minister. But Mr. Seymour did not consider the reason to be a sufficient one, and invited the boy to repeat the sacred words, which he did with correctness. This exhibition went on for a short

time longer; after which Mr. Seymour, in a few words addressed to the children, tried to impress upon them the difference between "hiding the Divine Word in their heart," and merely committing it to memory; with which the long visit terminated, and they withdrew.

Miss North observed, 'If you could have seen the ignorance of these children when Mrs. Boniface began with them, you would be surprised at their attainments!'

'I am surprised at their attainments; but I fear you are mistaken in straining after this amount of mechanical proficiency.'

'Why need you call it *mechanical?*'

'Because it must keep its bare line of acquirement: *it is a certain response at a certain point*, that the children must for the most part have acquired, and there is very little of real value, I fear, in that.'

'I can assure you they are taught on a well-approved plan; but of course every one must be allowed their own opinions and preferences.'

'Do not let us shut out the subject with a general conclusion, but rather weigh it together. Take history, for instance. Those children give you dates and names correctly, which numbers who have read the chief historians of our land would fail in recalling, but you must be prepared for the entire passing away from their memory of these historical points; if they fade from the minds of those acquainted with the details, how much more of necessity where they exist as *points* alone! And then, what finally remains? A few

glaring facts along the line of history; such as one King of England beheading his wives; another murdering his young nephews; Queen Mary burning the Protestants. Even of Elizabeth's reign, the only impression will probably be the tragedy of Mary Queen of Scots and Lord Essex. The question then is, whether their previous ignorance was not nearer the truth than these few glaring facts which they will finally retain? They know nothing of political wisdom, of legislative enactments, of a kingdom defended and dignified; battles are to them only a name. If, then, you wish these English peasants to rally round England's throne, would it not be more in accordance with general knowledge and truth, to leave in their simple hearts the instinctive idea they have of THE MONARCH, rather than attach to it the blots and stains which, in their necessary ignorance of all general historical detail, are sure to be the fixed points in their minds?'

'But arithmetic? Mr. Seymour, you certainly must allow their satisfactory progress in that?'

'O yes, it may be of essential service to them; but I certainly would not press figures further. The constant obligation to remember where every text is to be found before repeating it, is literally the same as refusing to take a right and well-known road merely because the sign-post does not attest it. Think of those little heads in time of sickness, on their pillows, when they most want the Water of Life, unable to receive it peacefully, from inability to remember the chapter and verse, which, from school habit, has become essential. We expect the Divine Word to have its home in the heart, but figures can never go deeper than the head.

Miss North again turned the subject, and gave Mr. Seymour a short sketch of her parochial plans, visiting, meat-tickets, &c. Mr. Seymour listened silently, but Miss North liked an occasional assent and consent; therefore she rather hastily asked,—

'You do not repudiate system?' as it was system on which she had been enlarging.

'Well, as to that, I have as little to say to system as it has to me. It has its good, no doubt, as well as its evil; but I believe its peculiar good for us depends on its being a necessity, not a preference.'

'I certainly, then, do not agree with you, for there is system in all things; the universe itself is a system.'

'A system in all things created no doubt there is, open to our investigation. And a system there may be in all things spiritual, but its circle and its cycle are both too vast for our apprehension, its harmony is traceable only by faith. I believe we are wiser in always endeavouring to follow the guidance ceaselessly promised us, acting in harmony or unison with our glimpses of the Divine mind, than in framing mimic systems of our own, which, as they cannot include all the parts of perfection, are sure to be at fault somewhere, if not everywhere.'

'I really cannot follow your meaning.'

'I merely suggested,' Mr. Seymour rejoined, 'that our pigmy *systems* must of necessity be at fault somewhere; and that I, therefore, think it wiser to endeavour to act in constant harmony with the Divine relationships and the truths un-

folded to our apprehension, rather than to constrain ourselves and all things into the narrowing circumference of human systems. These parochial appliances of which you tell me, *may* be a necessity of circumstances in an overwhelming population, and then we may hope they would accomplish more than could be done without them. But in districts where every household may be known, I should think it a higher course to act in harmony with the precepts and examples of the Divine Word, as applied individually to every case. I would, in such a district, neither visit on a system, nor give temporal relief on a system. The great point is, I believe, to keep on both sides a power of spontaneous action and a flow of life. Otherwise you will have work, but no vitality; and for this you will, perhaps, be at a loss to account.'

'I am sure our clothing-club system has been most useful to the poor.'

'No doubt it has, and always would be, because household economy, and such mere materialisms of time, can be thoroughly comprehended in a system; and the poor are aided by their own regular savings, as effectually as the dormouse by its stored-up nuts in the winter: that which is instinct in the mere animal, must be regulated by discretion in man. But when you come to the want of body or mind that meets you in your neighbour to-day, it is a serious loss to sacrifice the *gush* of charity to a customary dole; or to fetter, by set times, the communion of spirit.'

But Miss North was not at all persuaded that the plans

which she had arranged and carried out were not the most desirable, and she therefore saw no necessity for a change.

On the following day Edward Seymour took his leave, not expecting to come into residence for a period of some months. The previous evening, spent by Mrs. Barrington at the Hall, had strengthened the union of feeling; and the mutual interest of the tie was cemented between them.

Christmas passed once more over those English villages; the last that was to raise no deep responsive feelings from hearts awakened by a pastor's spirit.

In the month of February the General and Mrs. North consented, at their son's persuasion, to spend six weeks in London, accompanied by Antonia and Leonore: Captain North was to be of the party. Miss North and Clara were to remain at home. Antonia, whose every pore was open to drink in the full measure of every interest that met her in life's pathway, enjoyed the six weeks vividly. Leonore always lived twice as effectively in all that was shared with Antonia; the General and Mrs. North found a reward for their effort, and the Captain a constant pleasure, in the interest and enjoyment they witnessed in their two young companions. The details of the six weeks presented a rapid succession of events too long to be narrated. So we turn from the vast city's torrent tide of human life and action, to trace the lowly course of one deep streamlet's bed—the lot of a village lad.

Jonas Ling had toiled on at the shoemaker's stall in the neighbouring town. Countless times did his pulse beat

quicker at the roll of a carriage and a glance at Mr. Beltimore's livery, believing he might then be coming to call him to the consummation of the long-delayed opportunity; but no, it was not so! Then Jonas reasoned with himself, 'It no doubt was beneath such a gentleman to call and ask for a shoemaker's apprentice! More likely he would send a messenger to summon him to his presence.' He glanced at every figure entering the shop, but no messenger arrived there for him. Or, 'perhaps Mr. Beltimore might drop him a line on paper.' O, sickness of hope deferred! surely they who inflict it so recklessly must one day themselves be made to feel the heart-faintness which it causes, that they may know the measure they have meted to others. Jonas Ling's was a sorrowful case, sorrowful as numbers without number! Had Mr. Beltimore not spoken resolvedly, Captain North would, in the first instance, have investigated the facts; and had Anastasia not so blindly relied on Mr. Beltimore, or idly rested on so vague a hope, Mrs. Barrington, who was ever as unwilling to pass by native capability, as she was to load a powerless mind with acquirement, would have made further inquiries about the boy. Words lightly uttered, and therefore easily forgotten, or even a slight vaunt, may blight another's prospects for life, by setting aside the aid that might effectually have promoted them. How great, then, the need to weigh the sincerity and truth of each expression!

No 'opportunity' had yet presented itself to Mr. Beltimore announcing in audible tones, 'I am Jonas Ling's opportunity!' therefore, of course, Mr. Beltimore waited still.

The next event was that the lad's father died. Then the boy went once more to Miss North, who advised him to apply to Mr. Beltimore. Mr. Beltimore received him kindly, was sorry for his long-exercised hopes, encouraged him, and said that after Christmas he was going to London, when he would visit a training-school and see what arrangements could be made for carrying out the boy's earnest desire. Merrily now did poor Jonas work at his last; and when his master was absent, cheered his toil with a song. In every possible interval of liberty he went down to his mother, and told her his day-dreams and night-dreams of the school; and the cottage-home he should have for her when she was feeble and old. Poor boy! can it be that your heart must be deserted of hope—the hope that looks out from your long-watching eyes, and rises in that carolling song, and sits with you side by side while you cheer your mother in her poverty-stricken widowhood?

Benson, General North's butler, was a great friend to poor Jonas; he had shown kindness to the boy from the very first of his coming from Mr. Beltimore's estate to the school; he knew how much he disliked his present employment, and Benson never went to the town without sparing a moment to look in, if possible, on the boy and cheer him with a kind word. To him, of course, Jonas imparted the hope which had been raised that the desire of his heart might shortly be fulfilled. But Benson only said, he hoped, indeed, that Mr. Beltimore might *for once* find the 'opportunity' for which Jonas had been so anxiously waiting, and now was so eagerly expecting.

Jonas Ling could not imagine that a gentleman could be disappointed of an opportunity.

Early in March Mr. Beltimore returned, during the General's absence in London. Breathlessly now Jonas Ling waited for a fortnight, afraid at the last to dash his good fortune by impatient boldness in asking. Then he met Mr. Beltimore, who barely noticed his bow, and giving no reply to his look of pressing inquiry, passed on. That footstep of his, as it passed, crushed the heart of the boy! He said nothing to any one; but a few days afterwards Benson approached Niss North and held out an open letter, saying, with a face ashy pale and quivering lip, 'From the lad Jonas Ling, ma'am!' Anastasia took the letter and read,—

'Dear Mr. Benson,

'You have always been a friend to me since I had the honour to sing my first Christmas-piece at the Hall; indeed, the best friend I ever had, except my poor mother! I write to take my grateful and respectful farewell, and most humbly to entreat you to stand a friend to my poor widowed mother.

'Mr. Benson, I am broken-hearted and deceived, and I will trust no more! Before the dawn of the morning I shall be off to the first town I can find, where I may 'list for a soldier. I stood the tyranny I am bound to so long as I had a whole heart, but it's more than an angel could stand with a broken one. My master knows my worth, but considers I am all in his power; indeed, Mr. Benson, it is an innocent revenge I take on him in only leaving him the loss. But my mother! if my heart were not broken already, the thought of her would

do it the next moment! I could not face the telling her that I am out-and-out cheated, as I know now I am. Mr. Benson, why cannot a gentleman say down what he means, and then stand by it? Please to make my humblest duty to the Captain, and I shall always think of him; and I will shoulder my musket as brave as he carried a sword! Make my humblest duty, and say, it would not all look so hard if I could get a sight of him in the fight; but I know he has done with the wars since that night we shouted. Will you, Mr. Benson, still stand my biggest friend, and show me the favour to think of my mother, and cheer her up, as I have tried to do in my letter, with the thought of my coming home a brave soldier that's fought for my Queen and my country, with a medal from the Queen on my breast? But if I fall, Mr. Benson, do think of my mother, and make intercession for her to the Captain (for sure enough I will die fighting bravely), that he would think of her in her old age, and not let her be carried off to the parish-house for the sake of the poor soldier lad that made his dying prayer to him that he would not! I dare not write again until I am clean out of the country, for it would be a killing chance to be hauled back again to my brutal master. There's only one thing looks hard, Mr. Benson, next to leaving my mother, that I always builded my hopes on filling my fellow-creatures' brains with knowledge and wisdom, and now I must go about knocking them out! I will only trouble your kindness with one word more, Mr. Benson. Pray never trust our Squire's promises for my poor widowed mother, for they are ten thousand times worse than the worst of denials,

for they fill out one's heart like a bladder, and then it goes clap in the end, and is broken! So commending my poor widowed mother to your care, I remain, Mr. Benson, your most grateful servant, 'JONAS LING.

'*Midnight, March* 23*d.*'

Miss North rang the bell, and Benson stood before her.

'This is a most desperate act of Jonas Ling's! I have no doubt Mr. Beltimore still has something in view. You had better go yourself and see Mr. Beltimore, and hear from him whether he thinks anything can possibly be done, only on no account show him Jonas Ling's letter.'

Then Benson coloured an indignant crimson.

'I beg your pardon, ma'am; but if I must lose my place by it, I could not bring my mind to ask Mr. Beltimore to meddle any more with the boy. I have made up my mind; and, if you please, ma'am, I am off to my master by the mail-coach to-night!'

'Off to London, Benson!' said Anastasia, in her turn assuming a high tone, with less reason than Benson, and not a little disquieted and surprised. 'I can give you no permission to leave the place for a desperate apprentice-boy in my father's absence.'

'I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I have not served my master these thirty years and more without the knowledge that he would consider my arrangements sufficient for all safety as can be taken by man. Mr. Howis' (Mr. Howis was the steward of the home-farm) 'will sleep here each night I am

away; he has given me his word, and he is twice the man, if it comes to protection, that I am now, whatever I may have been in my day; and Mrs. Chetwind will see that nothing is neglected. The dog-cart will take me down in half-an-hour from this time to the town, for I must be at the Bank before it closes, for I will act a father by the poor lad, and buy him off as sure as I have a penny to look to, if he can anywhere be found. My master will know about that. I'll write off to my master by the post to-night from the town, and tell him what I have taken in hand, and then it will strike no alarm when he sees me. The gardener is doing up a few things for my mistress as fast as he can, for, if you please, ma'am, I must be off in half-an-hour.'

'You must take the responsibility, Benson; I have nothing to do with it.'

Benson bowed and retired. Meanwhile Clara had left the drawing-room, and now she met Benson in the hall, and putting a bank-note in his hand, said, with a hurried tone,—

'Here, Benson, I would give you more, but it is all that I have. I am sure papa will make it up. Do buy off the poor boy! but will he have to go back to that shoemaker again?'

'No, miss, as sure as my master is a gentleman, and I am a man!'

Clara satisfied, hurried away, but not back to the drawing-room for fear of having to discuss the subject with Anastasia.

'Mr. Benson, just step in; here's a cup of tea all ready!'

'Not for the world, Mrs. Chetwind, all the same thanks, but the Bank may be shut.'

'Now you shan't so much as sit down; but just step in, it's all poured out and sweetened ready!'

Mr. Benson stepped in, there stood his cup of tea, and near it a plate, from which Mrs. Chetwind lifted a cover, and on it lay a little heap of silver and gold.

'There, Mr. Benson, there's not one has held back! not one of my girls nor your lads! There! take it just in a heap as it is; I have noted it down. You had better take one of the old wrappers, the night will be terribly cold with this east wind. I'll go across this evening and comfort up the poor widow with the telling of your being off for the boy, for they say she has never shed a tear, nor turned from stone-like since she heard it!'

Benson reached London, his master, and the Captain, with poor Jonas Ling's letter in his hand. Not a post was lost, letters were sent in every direction; but had the General, in his thoughtfulness, not said, 'Describe the poor boy, for it's a chance if he has not given a feigned name,' all would have been in vain. Poor Jonas, in terror at being traced and brought back to his master, had concealed his real name; but the description of his person given by Benson, for neither the General nor the Captain could have given it, at length brought tidings, and Benson was sent off to ransom and bring him back to London immediately.

Benson arrived at the place; but when the sergeant brought in the poor lad, no words could describe the boy's

despair. Falling down on his knees, he entreated and besought Benson to return, and not to betray him; and when Benson said it was impossible to return without him, and gave his word over and over again that he never should cross the threshold of his former master's house, Jonas said, 'O Mr. Benson! I dare not trust again, because you can't stand against law; there's none could do that that I know of; only if the Captain had given his word upon it, then I would have trusted, because he knows what a gentleman can do.'

Benson promised for the Captain, and declared and insisted, but all was in vain; the Captain had not said it, and the cheated boy would lean on no other word again. Then the sergeant insisted, and told him he would be sent off to prison as a runaway apprentice if he did not go in peace with the gentleman who was come to buy him off. Then Jonas looked defiance in his despair, and said, 'You cannot, shall not make me go! I am the Queen's servant now! I have been bought in with her money, and sent it all to my mother by a comrade to post in another town, and I will stand by my colours, come what will!'

Then the sergeant grew violent at the runaway apprentice boy claiming any right of service to the Queen; but Benson interposed and said, 'Be not angry, sir; if the poor lad has no colours yet, my master and my master's son are pretty near the top of the service; at least they would have been if they could have stood it till now, and they will make you amends for any kindness to the lad; he has been desperately cheated, poor boy! and he has no trust left in him; but be so

good as to use him well, and I will look in again to-morrow!'

Benson had no alternative but to go to an inn and write an account to the Captain, begging him to have the charity to write a few lines with his own hand to the poor boy. But instead of writing, Captain North set off in person by the next coach after receiving the letter; and the evening of that day saw poor Jonas Ling quiet, assured, and as happy as such a tempest-tossed heart of deep feeling could be, with the Captain and Benson at an hotel in the town. On the following day he went with them to London. All difficulties were overcome; and before the Captain returned with his family to the Hall he had settled poor Jonas at a training-college, to be educated as a schoolmaster. Such being the contrast between those who wait for opportunities, and those who, when others have lost them as it would seem for ever, yet, with a resolved heart of action, redeem them.

CHAPTER XV.

THERE are those who know what it is to make their earthly home in the midst of a people beloved and loving; to win, by daily prayer, the dew of Heaven's blessing for them; to be looked upon by them as a living witness of the truth and love of God; and as the Heaven-sent counsellor to them, from whose heart-judgment their simple trust seeks no appeal. There are those who know what it is to be in the midst of their people the chosen repository of the sorrows and the joys of childhood, manhood, and old age; in sickness to be looked for as the messengers of love, in death as the angel of blessing. To pray, and wait, and hope until the wanderer be restored, the prodigal brought home; to be at hand when the just man falls, the earthly helper to raise him up again and watch his steadier progress. To meet "the steps of the poor and the feet of the needy," bearing, with the haste of gladness, their first-fruits; a blessing from the hands of many who knew not that it was an ordinance in Israel, proving that God's appointment was a native impulse of the heart's awakened feeling; there have been, and there are such, and such was Edward Seymour.

The April violet bloomed on the banks when the young

Rector and his aged attendant Dora, the nurse of his childhood, took up their abode at the Alps. The Rectory was in a ruinous condition. Mrs. Barrington offered to receive Mr. Seymour at the Grange until the house could be rebuilt,—an offer which was gratefully accepted.

Before the first Sunday came, Edward Seymour had entered every dwelling, and looked in love on his people. His repose and ease of manner were attractive to all. Constraint or effort, which are hindrances under all circumstances to influence and confidence, are peculiarly felt among a rural population. Accustomed to the deep repose of nature, and to a slowness of mental activity in themselves and one another, they are oppressed or bewildered by any manner or address not perfectly natural. Edward Seymour pleased his people well; he entered their cottages, sat in quiet ease among them, and they felt at home with him—felt the presence of a human heart among them—turning to them in love and confidence, and in so doing enabling them to turn to it. He spoke with a kindness and interest that led them to speak to him; and he deferred making any personally direct appeals until a little mutual knowledge and confidence were gained. This excited their interest as to "what his preachment would be when it did come;" and, as at each dwelling he invited all to come both morning and afternoon on the next Sabbath day, because he had something to say to them all, which he should say nowhere but in the Church, and never say all over again, they secretly resolved, with very few exceptions, that they certainly would go.

'And then,' as an old man said in giving the account some time afterwards, 'if he didn't look out in every cottage-place for the young things, and said, "Let the little ones come to their Saviour! they must come *first*, for they always stand in his eye: so let them come up at half-after nine to the Church." And the poor dears were as pleased as young larks, and I warrant you there was none of them left lagging. No, no! I knowed all about it, for I thought to myself, "I'm no better than a babe in my ignorance, and a deal worse in my sin!" So I laid a hold on my staff and hobbled after them, up a' the hill; and I turned right in among them, and told the parson I just wanted to learn like a babe, and he said out to me, "Come then, and share in their blessing!" So down I sat on the old chancel bench, and down sits he on a doss in the midst, and down sit all the young things on the chancel-floor round him; he had had some bran new matting laid to keep off the cold chill, but that was just all. And one while he puts to them some words from the Bible, and here and there a quick chap of a boy catches it up almost at a snap, or a girl full as well, but he never ran after them quick ones with more, but staid a helping out the small bits of children, till I laid hold on it too. And then he comes out with a bit of a Psalm, and he's at them with that, and when they have laid hold on the verse as he say it, then he goes after singing it to them, till they sing it up along with him. I am sure if the time didn't seem gone afore it come! and the folks were filling up the seats; but afore that, he prayed them all to think always of the good God of Heaven when they came

in at the church door, and to ask Him to bless them, and he made them all say His name, "SAVIOUR!" O, how soft they did speak it out! He coaxed the poor little things till they whispered it, too; but he said never a word to drive any to speak it, for he said not one on this earth could speak it aright, only them as said it of *love!* And when I heard that, if I didn't take heart and say it too, with a tear in my eye, for I thought if them young things was bid to cling to it so, how much more an old sinner like me! At the least, I said every letter on it with love! I never learnt so much in all my born days as that morning prime, on the old chancel bench, and all them young things squat on the ground like a flock of lambs gathered round! This is my place, thinks I, and I will keep it, and so I has; and I never takes my seat on that old chancel bench but I whispers out from my old sinful lips that name, "SAVIOUR!"'

Mrs. Barrington walked up earlier than usual to the church on that day; it could not fail to be a day which she vividly realised as weighed in the balances of eternity. The responsibility of the *choice* was Captain North's, the responsibility of the *acceptance* Edward Seymour's, but the responsibility of the *appointment* was her own. Slowly and alone she ascended the hill, thinking to be the first to enter the church, and there to enjoy a short calm before the commencement of the service. Then the sight met her view of the village children all gathered and seated on the floor of the chancel, the pastor in the midst bending down to them and teaching the little ones to lisp gently the name of their

Saviour; the aged man on the old chancel bench in an attitude of fixed attention, his hands resting on the head of his staff, learning, as a little child, to enter the kingdom of Heaven. Mrs. Barrington looked for a moment on the scene; she remembered the words, "He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd, He shall gather the lambs in His arms;" and turned, with an overpowering feeling, to her pew.

Old Dora took the children for a few minutes' walk before the service began, and Edward Seymour entered his vestry alone. It was over—that first meeting with the children of his pastoral charge. O, the thrill of that hour when the children drew near! the young hearts not yet hardened, but ready for the good seed of the Kingdom, ready to come and sit at the feet of the teacher, and listen and love—who could meet them unmoved?

The Alpine bells were ringing out their first joyous peal when the Captain left his home that morning, in response to their call. He had no purpose of early entering the church, far more free felt the soldier beneath the arch of the sky, the blue vault of Heaven. He passed the church, little thinking that an infant congregation was already within; and climbing higher on the hill took up a lonely station to contemplate in unutterable thankfulness the bright fulfilment of hope, the large answer to prayer. It was yet early, and sitting down on the heathery turf, he again read from his Prayer-book the same appropriate words, that he had read from a neighbouring elevation on the day when the hope first unfolded before him—the Epistle and Gospel for St. John the Baptist. It

flowed through his soul like the river of God's pleasures, and brought down Heaven in blessed earnest and foretaste around him. He still sat there, the little volume half closed in his hand, watching the villagers as they now first appeared in sight from the valleys and the glens ascending the hill.

Then presently the tones broke on his ear of young voices almost beneath him. He rose in surprise and looked down on the village children, old Dora in the midst and the bigger children around her, all helping or trying to help her to climb their hill-side, a labour to which her aged feet were most unaccustomed. The Captain joined them, which increased the children's delight, for they all caught from infancy their parents' looks of love on him as he passed. With the Captain to strengthen Dora's motherly authority the young voices were hushed, and all walked in quiet order through the churchyard and church.

From that day Captain North became assistant-teacher in the Alpine Sunday-school, and to Dora's great relief always took the children himself to the hill-top before the service began. And when they had learned to sing, they would stand on the hill's highest point and lift up their young voices in praise; and the sound floated down on their parents below as they slowly ascended the hill to the church, 'as if it had been the little angels carolling their Christmases down from the sky!' How little can we estimate the effect of such seasons upon the hearts of the young, or imagine how, in after years, they will turn back in thought to the Sabbath hymns so vigorously sung in their childhood!

Miss North always walked early to the church of their own parish to manage the school; of late she had engaged Clara and Antonia to accompany her and take a small class; more, Miss North said, as a useful employment for them and an evidence of their interest, than from any necessity; for the school was not large, and the Rector's two daughters always assisted. On this eventful Sunday Miss North had gone off as usual with her two younger companions, not having an idea that any change in the family arrangements would be made. When the carriage came round to convey the General and Mrs. North to church, the General ordered it to drive to the Alps.

'To the church, sir?'

'Certainly!' and the carriage rolled swiftly away. The bell was tolling in when the General, Mrs. North, and Leonore entered the church; the veteran soldier looked round, for the first time in his life, on his tenantry and dependants united together as a worshipping congregation, not by religious experience or habit, but by a living influence which had already made itself felt in its attracting power among them, even "the love of the Spirit!"

The service began; the pastor's tones, though not loud, sank down into every ear, and their fervent supplication ascended to Heaven. When he entered the pulpit and stood up with his small Bible in his hand, and looked on the flock of his charge, whose souls, if his warning were not faithfully given, would be required at his hands, he paused for a moment under the awful weight of such divine declarations of pastoral responsibility; he paused as if unable to begin. Then again,

he heard the still small voice that on the shores of Gennesareth's lake said to the fishermen of Galilee, "Follow Me," and strengthened in heart he opened his Bible and gave out his text from the Gospel of St. John, chapter 1, part of verse 6—"A man sent from God." The pastor wished his people to know the authority he bore—From whom he came, Why he came, and Who he was. From whom he came—from GOD. "A man sent from GOD," from the Father everlasting; from that God who had made man to be holy, to be happy, to live for ever. And when man chose sin, and misery, and death, still God would not let His poor prodigal perish, but made a way by which he might return to his Heavenly Father's heart, even through the blood of God's beloved Son, Jesus the Saviour, which can cleanse the poor sinner from all sin, and make him happy again in the presence of God. It was from God, a God so full of love, that he was come. Why he came,—he came because God sent him; "a man *sent* from God." He was *sent;* he had not come of himself, but he had come as a messenger, bearing a message to them from Him by whom he was sent. God, this God of love, sent him to them, sent him with a message; and he should have to return to God and tell how he had been received, how his message was listened to, with what attention, with what belief, with what obedience. He must render an account to God of all. He had many things which God had sent him to say to them; they were all things belonging to their peace, all sent as a message from God's heart of love for them; and because they had to eat bread in the sweat of their brow,

therefore God had graciously appointed that they should come up every seventh day to meet His messenger and hear His message, that every week they might learn more; and keep all in memory by being reminded of what they had heard before.— He was "*sent* from God." Who he was,—a man; "a *man* sent from God," a man subject to like passions with themselves; one who could understand their temptations; feel their weakness, their ignorance; suffer in their wants and their sorrows. A man; one they could talk to, as friend with friend; telling all their difficulties, their desires, their fears. Not an angel, to whom they would be afraid to speak freely, but a man, one of themselves, to whom they could say all that was in their heart. Not a spirit, who if he came would soon depart again, but a man come to dwell among them, whom they could call to their homes and their side by night or by day, in sorrow or in joy, in sickness and in health, in life and in death. "A MAN SENT FROM GOD." What was their feeling? Did they not love the God of love who had not left them to perish, but had made a way by sending His Son to die for them on the tree, that every one might return like the prodigal son to his father's embrace? Would they not prove their love by coming to listen to the message God had sent, and by trying in every way to obey? If they would do this, how happy for them! Then, when he went back to God who sent him, and God asked about them, he would be able to say, 'They are coming! they are all coming! old men and aged women, fathers and mothers, young men and maidens, and little children,—they are coming

every one! I told them Thy words, and they received them, and believed that I came from Thee, and that Thou didst send me as Thy messenger to them. And they will soon be all gathered in Heaven, holy and without blame before Thee in love.'

There was a simplicity and pointed earnestness in the preacher's style which every mind apprehended; no involved sentences, no successive steps of argument. Saxon as pure as John Bunyan's, conveying the Heavenly truth which his own soul had so strongly grasped, that it could distil it even on minds whose power of apprehension was weakest. But his style, transparent in simplicity, never stooped to pick up aid from analogies of earth which had no native affinity with his subject; illustrations it had, familiar and natural, but not one that lowered the mind to the things of sense alone, instead of raising it by an illustration which unfolded more clearly divine relationships and truths. While the depth of his own spirit's intense love for the Master he served and the souls he came to win, breathed a living pathos and a spiritual unction from the message that he gave.

In the afternoon the church was crowded; it seemed to the Captain as he looked from the chancel on pews, aisles, and belfry, as if the pastor's own thrilling declaration, "They are coming! they are coming! every one!" was responded to already.

The text of the sermon was taken from the same chapter; the words, "There standeth ONE among you whom you know not." 'You know, for I declared to you this morning from whom I am come, why I am come, and who I am; even "a

man sent from God." But I have still to tell you that "there standeth One among you, whom," as yet, many of "you know not." I have a wonderful fact to tell you; He who sent me is come Himself. Surely God is in this place and you knew it not! He does not show Himself openly; when He has on some occasions done so, His greatness has struck fear into the heart.' (The instances were given of Manoah in the field, and the beloved disciple at Patmos.) 'But He is here: He is a God at hand, and not a God afar off. His eye marks all our wants'—(instanced from Hagar in the wilderness: "Thou, God, seest me.") 'His ear listens to our every word from dawn of day to set of sun, and all the night through: "Thou art about my path, and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways; for there is not a word in my tongue, but Thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether." He takes notice of the falling sparrow, clothes the lilies of the field, and feeds the hungry birds. Have you known Him? Have you remembered His presence? Have you feared to sin against Him? O, my people, I am come to say to you, "Behold Him!" He is waiting to see how I deliver my message, and how you receive it. Here we are gathered together in His Name, and He is in the midst of us. Behold Him! He is not only your Creator, He is also your Saviour, who gave Himself for your sins, tasting death for you,—the Lamb of God, whose "blood cleanseth from all sin." He is here to see who listens, who believes, who loves to hear of Him. He will be in your homes, to see who remembers Him, who commands their household after His holy will, who prays to Him in secret

for the forgiveness of sins, and for help in every time of need. He will be near you in your daily labour. "He considereth all our works." Jacob laid down in a desert place for a night's rest, with the hard ground for his bed, and a stone for his pillow, and when he awoke he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not!"

'"There standeth One among you whom you know not." Do you wish to know Him? I can tell you of Him, but I cannot give you the knowledge of Him. I can say, "Behold Him!" but I cannot show Him to you. You have eyes, and yet you see Him not; ears, and yet you hear Him not. How is this? Satan, the god of this world, has blinded your minds, that you may not see the Saviour of men, and may not hear His "still small voice" bidding you come unto Him that He may give you rest. Satan has done this, and you, by consenting to sin, have given Satan this power. Lift up your prayer, then, to your Saviour, your merciful God, who is waiting to be gracious. Ask Him to send His Holy Spirit down into your heart, to drive the devil out of it. Ask for the Holy Spirit, and God will send Him to you; and when He is come, He will open your eyes to see, your ears to hear, and your heart to love and obey. He will enable you to behold your God, and to walk with him.' Then, with an earnest appeal to those who already knew these things, that "whereunto they had already attained," they should by watchfulness and prayer continually seek to walk, "looking unto Jesus," setting the Lord always before them, and doing His will from the heart, the sermon concluded.

By the next Sunday, Mrs. Barrington had filled the chancel with forms, and the pastor, the Captain, and the aged Dora, divided the children between them, the old man filling his seat on the chancel bench, where the voice of the pastor fell best on his ear.

There had always been in the parish a strong feeling of respect for General North and the Captain, not only among their own tenantry and dependants, but equally with those on the then less befriended Roger-de-Lee estate. But respect for the pastor there had not been. When the Curate from the neighbouring town entered on his temporary charge, his feeling of the respect due to him personally was constantly disturbed by the villagers passing him by with no token of reverence. He had always waited for the reverence to himself before his look of recognition was given. It might be that he aimed at recalling the old feeling, fast fading away, of respect for an office; or it might be he felt a natural wish for respect towards himself: but he did not know, as yet, that the hand of the peasant is more effectually raised by the secret springs of his own hearty good will, than by any external requirement. He did not gain his point, and his glances of disapprobation only nailed more effectually the hat to the head. Edward Seymour did not trouble himself much about the reverence due to himself; his mind was always intent on the state of the heart; the happiness, the welfare, the joys and sorrows, efforts and difficulties of all around him; he won the stronghold of hearts, and it was not very long before, if tokens of respect could have satisfied, he

had them to the utmost: if the children forgot their reverences, it was not in their indifference, but their love, little hands that had forgotten to touch their hats, would be thrust into his, and infant sorrows would be poured out to his listening ear. He was "gentle among them as a nurse cherisheth her children." He walked in the love wherewith God had loved him, and "love is stronger than death;" and "love is the fulfilling of the law."

Miss North had been not a little surprised at the absence of her parents from their own parish church, and hastily greeted her father, 'I had not the least idea, papa, that you and mamma were not coming to church as usual.'

'No, I do not suppose any one had, except your mamma and Harry; but now you may give general information that I shall attend nowhere else, until the same truth can be preached and exhibited in the life elsewhere. And you may add, if you like, by way of a reason, "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"'

'I think great offence must be given if you *quite* forsake our own church for the "Alps!"'

'Quite, or not at all, Anastasia! No half-and-half measures for me! If I see the light I will follow it, and not sometimes go after a little darkness instead. And as to offence, I have given that fifty times, by speaking the truth; therefore it is a mere act of consistency to give it now by hearing the truth.' And then, looking round on all, he added, 'Make your choice, my children; I invite you to take my counsel and come with me.'

This, of course, was conclusive with Clara and Antonia, who were happy at the release and the privilege. Antonia offered her services any time in the week for the school as a compensation, but these were not accepted. Anastasia was annoyed; it was a trying position for her; humility, truth, and love, would have triumphed over the difficulty, but Anastasia only stumbled at it. She went always as before to their own parish church, making continually the vain attempt to smooth matters,—half excusing, half explaining; in this way lessening the startling effect that such a silent witness as the General leaving his own parish church might have had.

CHAPTER XVI.

In the spring of this year, Laura again met Mrs. Barrington at a dinner-party at the Hall. She felt secretly glad that so it was, but determined to conceal her real feeling with a show of perfect indifference. When the ladies left the drawing-room, Mrs. Barrington took her seat on a sofa by Laura, and made a friendly attempt at conversation. Laura met it with a rudeness, not natural to her, under the mingled feeling of revenging her past disappointment at Mrs. Barrington's refusing her mother's invitation, and a wish to be able to show complete indifference towards one who had acquired an acknowledged influence on all sides. Laura returned an off-hand response, then instantly rising, walked away. Mrs. Barrington had never sufficiently encouraged pride of heart to admit of its rising in resentment at rudeness; she was rather apt not to suppose it absolutely a personal disrespect to herself, but to believe it possible that it was the result of a yet ill-regulated disposition; therefore Laura's rudeness only awakened in her a question as to its cause, and whether that cause could be reached and exchanged for a brighter and happier source of feeling and expression.

Laura had walked off in seeming independence; but she

felt no triumph at having been rude to Mrs. Barrington, her heart was too true to have satisfaction in rudeness towards any one for whom she felt respect, and the evening dragged heavily on. At length an irresistible chance drew out her mischievous wit to the utmost. One of the Rector's daughters, Anastasia's great ally, was taking up the offensive on behalf of parochial education, against the young wife of a tenant on the General's estate, who became rather warm, though little qualified to discuss the subject, her opinion being founded on her husband's annoyances. The antagonists were very tolerably matched, and might fairly have argued out the subject together; but Laura must needs come in, though quite under cover at first, siding with the young wife of the tenant, who soon felt her antagonist give ground under the telling effects of Laura's well-directed aim. Anastasia, in the distance, had no inclination to betray any consciousness; her poor ally looked vainly towards her, but Anastasia appeared entirely engrossed with the musical performances of the evening. The Rector's daughter was completely pent up in a corner, the young wife of the tenant triumphing in the victory. At this point Laura would, in a general way, have retired, and left her victim to escape, but thoroughly out of humour herself, she was glad of an opportunity of tyrannising a little, and resolved to bring her victim to a full confession before she released her, which the Rector's daughter most anxiously avoided, considering it a weakness and a betrayal of the cause, which Anastasia would not fail to look upon as unworthy of one whom she had made

her ally. Laura, reckless of all beside, had just given a very hard hit by way of bringing things to a point, when a low kind voice said from behind, 'If I had succeeded so well, I could afford to be a generous antagonist, and let my prisoner off on good terms at the end!' No one exactly heard or understood the murmured words except Laura; she knew in a moment, and looked round on Mrs. Barrington, who directly spoke again,—

'Suppose you change sides; I will engage to defend your position, and you show our young friend what can be said in aid of her argument. Now then, I am ready; it will only make a pleasant variety, quite as easy to you, and your antagonist will accept your aid for education's sake.'

This timely balance of power, together with the kindliness and playfulness of the tone, restored good-humour on all sides; it put the Rector's daughter at ease again, but the words and the tone fell into Laura's heart far below the surface of the educational controversy. A grateful sense of undeserved kindness rose within her, and its expression was not difficult to be read on her countenance. The Rector's daughter and the young wife of the tenant, best satisfied to escape further discussion, were both making good their retreat, congratulating themselves in such an escape from the field; and Mrs. Barrington invited Laura to a seat by her side. The seat she had so rudely left hardly more than an hour before was now hers again, and a voice, not of general kindliness, but of personal interest, addressed her, 'You were a little hard on your victim, I am afraid, were you not?'

'Yes, I was. I am not always so; but to-night I was cross, and wanted a vent for ill-humour.'

'Do you generally find it in pursuit of the ludicrous?'

'I don't often want it for that, because I am not often cross, unless my wishes are put out of the question. I first took to it as a relief to the endless monotony of all things; and now it pursues me, and I am fated all my life to see family faces in burning coals, fictions in facts, and absurdities in all things!'

'Very likely to be so! Our own minds give their hue to all things around us.'

Laura was not at all prepared for this assent to her hopeless assertion: fixing an unconsciously anxious look on Mrs. Barrington, she said, 'Then you think that there is nothing for me but resignation to my fate?'

'No, I do not say that; I would certainly recommend a struggle for liberty rather than to live a slave to any propensity.'

'I have no doubt it would be a finer thing in theory; but really, when you come to experience, the monotony of society is so absolute that one cannot withstand the temptation of getting up a little effervescence on the surface. I do assure you, that in the general society of this neighbourhood every one is bottled-up at the evening's end, to come out again exactly the same mixture—material, weight, and measure, on the next occasion! Could any one resist working it up to a slight froth of superficial freshness?'

'I dare say not, if you possess the power, and that one

power only! Yet in every circle, and almost every individual, there is something fresh, if you had the skill to draw it out; but if you are on the search for the comic alone, the beautiful in all things will be sure to lie hidden from your view!'

'It is hopeless now! Whatever I might intend to discover, this discerning faculty I have cultivated would always point out a touch of the ridiculous.'

'If you really wish to liberate yourself from such a necessity, why not turn for a time to things which cannot be converted into ridicule? I suppose you have hardly laughed secretly at a flower?'

'O innocent and lovely things! They were once the blessing of my life; but papa has a first-rate gardener now, and our garden, which is not very large, is laid out, every foot of it, in exact regularity. Year after year there is the same monotony about it, until I have settled it all into a cultivated circle of society. In one place we have a triangle of blue, in another of scarlet, in another of orange, and the stiff array of flowers seem mutually engaged in paying compliments and showing off themelves, as if they had all dressed up in different uniforms for a public masquerade; and I am tired out and out of the things I once loved.'

'That is a pity. Could you not obtain permission to introduce a little more natural variety and freedom?'

'O no; I have begged to be allowed to take charge of the garden with only the under-man for hard work, but papa would not hear of it; he said I should only get it all in disorder, and give it up in a month.'

'Poor child! But perhaps you have not shown perseverance enough in things that your parents require for them to trust you in your own line?'

'I don't think that papa and mamma care much about my doing anything that I don't like; but papa's garden is his fancy, and every blade of grass must grow as a blade of grass should grow! I used to get up while all the house were asleep and gather the flowers, and arrange them at my will, but the gardener complained to papa that he could keep nothing choice, so now I have to ask for a nosegay, and of course I don't care to have it.'

'Certainly it looks rather hopeless, and I should feel very much as you do. What do you say to becoming head-gardener for me? I have ground wild enough to entertain you at will.'

'Do you really mean it?' asked Laura, in unbelieving delight.

'Indeed I do, my dear; I shall be most happy to see you busy at your pleasure about the old place. I can promise you a workman from the village, and sometimes my old coachman can help, but they neither of them possess much knowledge, so you must arrange and direct, and they shall work.'

'O, how exquisite! Indeed, indeed I think you will cure me! I feel almost as if that ugly old doge of mine were dead already!'

Mrs. Barrington, with a smile of more than usual kindness replied, 'We shall be happy, indeed, if we can bury a tyrannous necessity at the foot of the first tree we come to!'

'When may I begin?'

'To-morrow, if you like.'

'But may I ask your advice about the flowers?'

'O yes! I am not easily interrupted, so you need never fear an appeal.'

'What happiness!' exclaimed Laura, and all the discontent of her aspect had passed into a glow of innocent delight at this betrothment to the flowers at her will.

Laura had found the one influence that her character naturally wanted,—a superior mind, gentle in its decision, able and willing to understand and take an interest in the path she trod.

Early and late in that spring-time Laura was seen, rosy with labour, and often looking up for a glance from those ivy-mantled windows, or for the smile that she reverenced and loved, or a word of direction and praise. Sometimes she gathered bright companions round her, Clara, Antonia, and Leonore, and they lighted up the foreground of the old moated Grange, or they might be seen among the near recesses of its pine-woods, training a bright undergrowth of sweet blossoming creepers. On any emergency, old Allen, the head-gardener from the Hall, gave his counsel on the spot; and the old scarlet veteran, and the younger workman, who was no other than the husband of Clara's first cottage friend, both aided, and learned a great amount of knowledge from experience,—at least so Laura asserted. And Mrs. Barrington was happier in the young life of hearts healthfully opening to the influence of Nature around them, than she would have been in the most finished perfection of artistic gardening.

"Considering the lilies," Laura found a life and refreshment, which supplanted the need of all that before had found its fuel in the annoyance and ridicule of others. And so work became a blessing, as it first was in Eden; and because one spirit of higher and deeper tone had cared to know, why such rugged mazes were chosen by a young heart to wander in, instead of paths of pleasantness and peace,—had cared to know why, and to understand and meet the want, that young heart was rescued and raised to a life of bright enduring realities, whose first steps—as we have seen—were strewn for her feet with spring-flowers.

Let it not be thought that the old moated Grange furnished a means which could otherwise not have been found; the heart devising that remedy, if it had not been at hand, would have found out some other no less effectual. The skill of the workman is in finding his material and bringing it to bear, "his God doth instruct him and teach him."

In the summer the new Rectory rose on the site of the old house, shaded by the same old trees, and looking forth from the hill's western side on the same lovely landscape of intermingling hill and valley as before. "One generation passeth, and another generation cometh," but each during its brief stay is writing on the leaves of time the record of its life,—the fresh unwritten leaves lie waiting the fresh comer still, because the volume of the book is not yet complete, but when it is, then will the perfect record of the whole life of each one be there!

One room in the new Rectory may claim a short description; it occupied a complete end in length, and was lighted

by a large window to the east, to the west it opened with glass doors upon the lawn, it was warmed by one large open fireplace, and hung with engravings of Scripture subjects. A door from the study opened into it, another door in it opened with a porch to the garden. It was used for the household prayers morning and evening, and any of the poor who came up were able at once to enter it by the porch to the garden. It was also used as a dining-room, and served every purpose for which a large room was required; the rising and the setting sun gave it always a cheerful aspect; and its large logs of burning wood, supported only by the iron dogs, gave it in winter a bright and glowing warmth; the floor was covered with a matting of cocoa-nut fibre, and its chairs and benches were of very homely construction; but it soon became a favourite and familiar room, peopled with the incorporal forms of bright and blessed associations.

All this was agreeable to the taste of the Captain; but on the fitting up of the other apartments a discussion arose between Edward Seymour and Captain North, the latter maintained that the choice must be between the elegance and ease of modern furniture, or the curious antique of Mrs. Barrington's.

'It may be so for the Squire,' Edward Seymour replied, 'but the pastor has a position of his own, a position more entirely independent of circumstantials than any other can be on earth,—a spiritual position, and one, therefore, at liberty to discard all attractions apart from those of the spirit that it breathes. I do not mean to say that in furnishing my

house I would choose an ugly form in preference to a tasteful one, or a dull hue in preference to a cheerful one, but I will have no costliness, no assumption of style! If my Rectory possesses attractiveness, of which I could not be satisfied that it be devoid, it shall owe it as far as possible to its pervading spirit!'

'Of course, my dear fellow, no one visits his friends because his chairs are of satin-wood, and his carpets from Persia.'

'I am not so sure of that; I strongly suspect that many and many a dwelling owes more than its guests would be willing to confess to its mere circumstantials; strip it of its style, and where are the many who formerly were often to be found there? The attraction that once was there has passed away for them!'

'Well, so far as that, the eye misses what it is accustomed to, and people expect in a gentleman's residence its ordinary accompaniments.'

'O North, say rather the eye has too often more appetite than the mind or the heart! Satisfy the eye and the ear with the polished embellishments of fashionable taste, and the mind and the heart will give in to very meagre fare. Who should raise a witness against this, if not those whose position is a *spiritual* one? What avails it that we are for ever proclaiming "The fashion of this world passeth away," if yet we follow after it as closely as possible? I do not wish my Rectory to be a dull, tasteless place; I would gladly have it capable of presenting an attractiveness extending throughout the long line from the prince to the peasant; but

I am quite sure that more is lost than is gained by introducing conventional style: the moment you consent to this, you merge the universal in the exclusive, and surely the pastor's aim in all things should be the universal in opposition to the exclusive? The Master, in whose service I have been brought here, has declared, "All souls are mine!" Let my dwelling then be equally open to all, equally attractive to the true-hearted in every rank; even as I trust my time, my counsel, and my effort, will be for all without distinction. And truly, North, I sometimes fear the artizan will rise to the dominant faction of mind, for where intellectual taste stoops to the *slavery* of fashion, it must of necessity lower its whole standard and cripple its whole power.'

'Well, Seymour, I reverence your feeling. I can give you the interest of a brother, if I cannot offer the taste of a friend.'

Captain North recounted to his father the conversation with Edward Seymour. The General said it was a feeling he could understand and approve; but he added, 'We ought to contribute something permanent to the home of your friend; and as it seems we cannot gratify him by the gift of a candelabra, I think we had better adorn it with some one of the paintings that crowd our own walls.'

'I do not suppose he would accept it. He said he was resolved against all costliness of embellishment in his home; he thinks simplicity more suitable to one whose calling is not of the world.'

'O Harry! I read him better than you do; and so I

ought, for I have known the world longer. Take him that small Salvator Rosa from the dining-room, where no one ever discovers its beauty, hardly its existence, and he will hang it on his study-walls with delight.'

'Swerve from his principle, then you think, at the first attractive temptation?'

'No such thing! It is not the noble efforts of genius he is resolved to exclude in his pastoral dwelling, but the useless decorations of fashionable life. Painting is a mental reflection of Nature, a shadowy creation by the child in imitation of the Almighty Father. Neither is your friend acting upon a narrow prejudice, but upon a broad principle; and I feel persuaded that he would not be induced to give it up. I look with a keen eye on the carrying out of principles far newer to me than to you, principles whose claim is to an origin from above. Your friend won my confidence from the first, as did his patroness, Mrs. Barrington.'

'What was it in them that won it so quickly?'

'The perfect *nature* about them; there was no fettering chain! I would defy any one to talk with them, and not allow that in them is a spirit walking at liberty. I do not say it of them alone, it is equally true of Harry North, and that angelic Antonia from the first hour that she entered this house as a child.'

'How, then, father, does it strike you with others?'

'Well, I believe you will find one of three great motives impelling most men forward—expediency, duty, or love. Expediency is a wide straggler over the face of the earth,

and cheats every follower it has. Duty is a high motive, but not a supreme one, and because it is not supreme I believe it very readily admits of self-deception; but when a man follows his aim from love, you will not easily find him swerving from it. The following out a purpose from duty alone gives a constraint; it presses unduly at one point, and stops short at another: it does not command the whole being, and so breathes not in harmony; it has a rigidity about it that repels even when you respect the motive. But let a man follow his aims from the love of them, and they all flow on naturally; and there exists the fullest human hope that can exist of awakening in others a feeling of response.'

Captain North thought it still his safest course to communicate the intention before bestowing the gift; but he found that his father's habit of observation had enabled him, from short intercourse, to estimate truly. Edward Seymour fired up from his ordinary repose in the expression of his pleasure, until the Captain exclaimed, 'Well, really, my father knew you better than I did. I should have certainly taken for granted that pictures would have been amongst the lading cast overboard to lighten the ship.'

'O North, what a shame to have so misunderstood me! I might as well cut down that solitary cedar on the lawn as refuse such a picture for my walls—a crime against my fellows, seeing both hold their place among the elevating inspirations of earth.'

The picture was hung above the study mantelpiece,

where it caught the western glow in its glory; and instead of being one overlooked among numbers it became a constant object of refreshment and pleasure.

Mrs. Barrington built a schoolroom, to which General North liberally contributed; and the village-schoolmistress, who had worked under Mr. Seymour in his curacy with happy influence and success, was allowed to follow him, and take the entire charge of his school at the "Alps."

So the Rectory, and all that belonged to it, was finished, with the exception of the drawing-room, which was for the present left untouched. Edward Seymour was very fond of his large room, which was a great comfort to old Dora, as it gave her sometimes the opportunity of giving the study "a righting." But her master was never long content to sit anywhere save in the midst of his books; and one shadowy companionship he had in that study which he never seemed long satisfied without—a miniature picture of his mother, who passed from earth before his life had unfolded to definite purpose, but her spirit had given its tone to that of her son. The Bible from his infancy looked bright, because linked with her smile; and God must be Love, because his mother breathed His Name and His blessing in her tenderest embrace of her child. Such were his feelings and conclusions in childhood. And often did he rise from his book or his pen, and gaze intently on that buried face, as though he dreamed he could waken response, and meet the breathing of love or of blessing.

CHAPTER XVII.

'I MET that poor mad woman in the village to-day!' said Anastasia, as the cloth was removing from table; 'she really terrified me, for before she has always started away and avoided me, but to-day she stopped, put aside her veil, and fixed such a look upon me, as if she were going to say something terrible. I really was too frightened to stop, and hastened on. I suppose she must have heard of my call upon her, and so wished to speak to me. I am sure I hope I shall not meet her again; I could not describe the wild expression of her countenance.'

No immediate response was made by any one to Anastasia's description of her walking encounter; but when the servants were gone, General North said severely, 'If you choose to pronounce people mad, Anastasia, I desire that you only do so in your own family; I will not allow such loose charges to be circulated on authority through my household! What grounds have you for asserting this individual of whom you speak to be mad?'

'Every one takes it for granted; her appearance and manner are enough; she is always walking alone, in the loneliest places, dressed in a forlorn way, starting aside if

any one meets her; and, towards evening, a person who looks like a sort of attendant, goes out and gives her her arm, and brings her home. I have met them myself, and heard of them continually in the village.'

Then the General said earnestly, 'My dear Anastasia, it distresses me to see you continually allowing yourself in thus building up assertion from inferences of your own, and of others equally unworthy of trust! Get any lover of *truth*, for its own sake—to say nothing of *charity*—and let all you have just now said be sifted, and I will engage it will all be resolved into shadow alone. It is this way of speaking, both of facts and of persons, which is the bane of society; I will never allow it to pass current in my house, therefore you must correct the tendency, or check the expression of it.'

Days passed on: Anastasia did not venture to refer to the subject again; by most it was forgotten, but Antonia still thought on the stranger! She had met her when riding out with her uncle, and it was once in a lonely place; but the stranger had not started aside, she had passed on as if unobserving.

The stranger referred to had taken lodgings at the carpenter's shop, and had not been many weeks in the village. Antonia asked Chetwind if she knew anything about her. Chetwind said that she only heard that she had engaged the lodgings for six months, and was there with a young woman who came with her and always waited on her. But Miss North said that the poor thing was out of her mind; and as Miss North had inquired at the house, no doubt she had heard it

there; the people of the village had got the same notion, but by what Chetwind could learn, it seemed to her they all took it up from what Miss North had said or asked when she called about at the houses; so how it really was, Chetwind was sure she did not know.

'Aunt,' said Antonia, 'I cannot forget that poor lady in the village, whom cousin Anastasia supposes to be mad! I really do not think she is mad! I wish I might call and leave her some flowers?'

'I don't suppose she is a lady, my dear! Your cousin says she is a forlorn, wild-looking person, but she may be equally pleased with flowers; you may take her any you like.'

'I am afraid cousin Anastasia will not like my attempting to see her when she has been refused admittance?'

'You cannot help that; when people are ready to be offended, some cause is sure to arise; but if you feel any hesitation, you had better take the flowers from me; if I send you, it will put an end to the difficulty.'

Antonia gathered rose-buds whose full beauty was yet to come. The head-gardener passed by as she was gathering them, and she told him who they were for; he fetched a little basket in which he laid some sprigs of green to blend with the roses, and as he gave it to Antonia for the flowers, he said:

'I always reckon that the flowers have been given full as much for the heart as for the head; so, maybe, the poor thing will take pleasure in them, though she be mazed, as they say.'

'O Allen, I don't think she is! But I will tell you, if I am able to find out, whether she is pleased with the flowers.'

Allen bowed; and as his eye followed Antonia for a moment, with the basket of gathered rose-buds in her hand, he murmured, 'God bless her!'

Antonia had written a note which she laid on the flowers:—

'Dear Madam,—My aunt, Mrs. North, begs your acceptance of a few flowers. It gives me the greatest pleasure to be the bearer of them, in the hope that they may please you.

'Yours most sincerely,

'Antonia North.

'I took the flowers, aunt, and the tears came into the good servant's eyes when I gave her the little basket. She did not say anything about her mistress, but she thanked me herself so gratefully.'

'You had better take some more in a few days, and ask the gardener to gather you a basket of fruit. You can have them carried for you, or go down in the pony-chair if you like.'

'I shall like to carry them myself. I shall be so glad to go again: she may be in great *sorrow*, and if so, perhaps she might be comforted.'

When Antonia went again with the basket of fruit on her arm, and the little basket of flowers in her hand, the servant said,—'I think my mistress would see you, if you would be so kind as to wait while I ask her?'

Antonia was soon invited in, in to a little dreary room; the blinds shut out the view of earth and sky—no books or work—a little ready-furnished room let as a lodging.

The stranger sat there all alone, her pale and grief-worn face unveiled, but her eyes were not raised; she had the little basket of flowers just brought by Antonia before her, and she looked on them. She rose a moment as Antonia entered, and said,—'I wished to thank you for your great kindness to me, a stranger.'

Antonia took a seat near her rather than opposite, and said in response, 'It was a great pleasure to me to bring my aunt's little gift; I had to choose the flowers, and I wondered what flower you thought most beautiful? I made a guess, and brought you rose-buds.'

'They are all beautiful, but not for me!'

'O yes; the beauty of these flowers is all for you! not one has opened yet, they will all unfold beneath your care, and bloom for you?'

'You are very kind; they shall not want care.'

'Nor *love?*' asked Antonia pleadingly.

'*Love!*' said the stranger wildly, '*love* is dead for me!'

'O but you can love these flowers,' said Antonia, with earnest gentleness—'these sweet flowers, gathered and unfolding for you?'

For a while the stranger pondered, then answered in a low sad tone, 'Yes, I can love the flowers.'

'And the God who made them, and sends them to you!' tenderly added Antonia, as without seeming to expect response, she rose, pressed the stranger's hand in hers, and was gone.

In a few days Antonia called again. The servant said

her mistress was out walking, and begged Antonia to come again soon. When the stranger found that Antonia had been in her absence, she would not on the next day, nor on the following, take her usual walk—her wandering walk, as if she knew not whither,—cared not where—she would not take her walk, but sat within.

On the third day Antonia called early, and was admitted to the little dreary room.

'I am so glad to see you again!' said Antonia; 'I came early to-day that I might not miss you.'

'You would not have missed me; I have not left the house since I heard you were coming again, and I should not until I had seen you; but this room is as dreary as Death, I fear.'

'Death is not dreary to me,' said Antonia in a tone whose music only breathed peace as she spoke; and then without pursuing that subject, she added, 'I shall love to stay with you, if I may, for a little while this morning?'

The stranger looked up on Antonia, then rose, and with a feeling of prompt consideration, drew up the window-blind; the window was open, and the blue sky smiled upon them, and the soft fleecy clouds floated by.

'It is a lovely day,' said Antonia, as she suddenly felt the transition from the curtained room to the bright expanse of Heaven.

'Yes; lovely for the happy! but Nature's smile only mocks my deep misery, so I shut it out all the day long.'

'God has sent me to share that deep sorrow!' said Antonia most tenderly.

'No, no! I do not believe but that He will at least allow me the comfort of feeling that I have borne what He laid upon me uncomplained of and alone.'

'But it cannot comfort your sorrow to bear it *alone!*'

'No, I know it; there is no comfort for me; but for others to share it would be only added misery!'

'Not if sent by God; it would be added misery to refuse what He sends!'

'What is it that makes you think that God sent you to share my sorrow with me?'

'Because I asked Him! I thought of you night and day, prayed for you, loved you, before the first time that I called on you.'

'O, could it be possible?'

'Yes, indeed it was so! it was God who put it in my heart; and now He sends me to ask you if you can trust me?'

The desolate, the broken-hearted stranger could question with the pleader no longer; one moment she looked on Antonia, then hid her face and wept; but her tears were not what they had been, it was not now anguish of spirit, but tenderness that had bid them flow, and they gave relief instead of exhaustion. Antonia felt this, and did not try to arrest them, but waited awhile until the mourner spoke through them, and said,—

'"Trust you?" Oh, yes! trust you, and bless you! God, who sends the desolation of sorrow, only knows what the mercy of sympathy is—such sympathy as can warm the numbed heart into feeling again!'

'O, then you will not deny me, but will let me share all?' said Antonia,

'No, not deny you; but if I try to tell you my sorrow, I can only give facts, I cannot give all that made the life of those facts!'

'No, you cannot, but God can! Only tell me the facts, and God will give the feeling of all—all that is not still to be sacred between your heart and His—that He will keep hidden. I shall be able to understand all except that!'

The stranger looked as if she were unused to such whispers of faith; but she met them as a child meets an influence it feels but understands not. For a while she sat silent by Antonia, her eyes raised to the soft summer sky through the open window before them. At length she said,—

'O, it is long, long since I have looked up to the sky! Not once since I was left desolate and alone upon earth; this hour, the first since that time which has brought me a sense of companionship, seems with it to have brought back the sky! I have loved all beautiful things, for their own sake; and the time was when they all seemed to smile upon me, but that time has gone by for ever!'

'Not for ever!' replied Antonia, 'only for a little moment, until we learn to love them not for their own sake alone, but for the sake of the Almighty Giver!'

'Yes, I daresay we may reason so until we have tasted desolation's cup, but then we find there is death in it—a lingering living death, by which all things we look on are shadowed to us.'

'Do you see *me* in that shadow of Death?' asked Antonia.

The stranger turned her face instantly, with haste, as in surprise at the question, but quickly answered, 'No; and I suppose that is why you are the first object I have been able to turn to; but I did not know it until you asked me!'

'Shall I tell you why it is that you don't see the same shadow over me?'

'Yes, if you can, tell me why.'

'Because I have tasted the same cup; but there was One who poured into that cup the balm of Life for me. I drink of it still, but it has not Death in it for me; and the same balm of Life is waiting for you.'

'Have you, then, known sorrow?'

'Yes, I am an orphan.'

'But have you a brother?'

'No, I was an only child; when God took my parents, I came to friends I had never seen before.'

'Then you don't know what it is to have had a brother, and to have lost him!'

'No, I could not tell you what it is; but if you could bear to tell me something of it all, I think I could understand enough to make our hearts one in sorrow, as I trust they may yet be in joy.'

'I think I could tell you all,' said the stranger, 'if you could come to me often so quietly as you have done to-day; but I am so unused to talking now, that I cannot bear it long; but I will not draw down that blind again,' she added, with the faint gleam of a long-forgotten smile on her lips; 'and I can think of all you have said because you said it.'

Antonia sighed, for that 'because you said it,' was still 'the love of all beautiful things for their own sake;' but she knew that to love for the sake of the Author and Giver of all good, must be a feeling enkindled by the felt presence of His love, and this she could ask, and believe that it would yet be given.

From that day Antonia was always welcome to the eyes of the mourner. Many days passed before she adverted again to the fact of bereavement which had shadowed her life. But one evening, when Antonia had been sitting long with her—the General and Mrs. North dining out that day—as she lingered on, the repose of her presence seemed to steal over the weary spirit at her side, and the stranger that evening told her history.

'We left England in our childhood; I, at least, was a child, my brother was older. My mother died before we left. We went because my father met with a reverse of fortune, which obliged him to sell our home. Oh, I remember our home so vividly! but I dare not think of it now, for everywhere it brings before me my brother! I remember so well the day when we packed up our treasures; my father had said we must only have one certain box-full, and my brother persuaded me to leave all my toys, and we filled it with books, and he said he would be always my playfellow there, and teach me my lessons from the books that we took; and so he did; it was happiness to learn when he taught; and when my father put him in an office, which he did soon after we went, then we used to get up almost at dawn, and sit under the blossoming

shrubs and fruit-trees, and read. He always made me promise to lie down and sleep in the heat of the day, but I did not think then that he never could do that, but had to work on hard in the close town. But he was well then. O, I never dreamed he could die, and earth was a paradise to me! Sometimes of an evening he was tired, and then I was miserable, and we wandered hand in hand in wild lonely places, and wept for our home, and for England, where it then seemed to us there was no such hard work as he had in that close office shut up all the long day in that foreign land! Then my father died, and we mourned for him; but I still had my brother! From that time his one effort was to bring me to England; for this he worked harder still than before. I did not know it then, but I found afterwards that he thought he should have to leave me alone, and he could not bear to think of leaving me anywhere but in England. At last he had saved enough money, and we sailed. Those days and nights at sea! O, how beautiful they were, with England before us, and my brother always at my side! Every day he grew stronger, until the tired look passed quite away, and we enjoyed all things together. My memories of England were vivid, though partial and few; but we had looked upon it from afar with an intensity of feeling, that those whose home has never been separated from its sea-girt shores, its changeful skies, and its green verdure, can perhaps seldom realize. In that far-off land we had read, we had loved, all that told of our country. From the prow of the vessel we watched at latest eve and the first dawn of day, for the distant glimpse

of the white cliffs of its shore; and when we stood on its beach, and felt it was ENGLAND—the feeling was one that wanted power of expression.

'It was England, but we had yet to feel that England was no longer home! My brother would not write to our relations until he had found a situation, because they had refused to countenance our return, and he felt sure they would look coldly upon us; they could not understand that poverty in England looked brighter than riches abroad. So we went to a lodging in London, and he soon had a clerk's place in an office; and in the long evenings he showed me the wonders of London. But he soon grew tired with overwork again, and he said I looked pale; and, though I did not tell him, I had a heart-sickness for the country, and longed to be away from all the hurry and turmoil of that endless city. So he answered an advertisement for a situation in a country town, and we went; and he took a little cottage of four rooms in the country, it was covered with roses, and shaded by a large oak, and its garden so pretty! Here, again, we were happy; it was England, and home! My poor Lucy came to us there as our servant, and my brother walked to the town every day. Two blessed years we spent there; but before this last winter was gone he broke a blood-vessel, and in a few weeks he had left me for ever! Then the world died to me, and I feel it can never live again—buried for me in his grave in that village churchyard. O, I wish I were sleeping there with him! Lucy has promised that I shall; and we spend as little as possible,

that there may be enough left to carry me to his grave, and her to her home—only she never thinks of herself!'

'O, never think of not having all you want,' said Antonia. 'I have more a great deal than I want, and we will share it altogether. I will show you what a *sister* can be! and I will take care of Lucy, she shall have all she wants for herself, and for others too!'

'Will you indeed take care of Lucy? then my one care is gone! I have always been afraid she would starve herself for me; and that fear has haunted me night and day. I have no fear for myself, for one day he said to me, "I did not think I should die so soon! but there is a hundred and fifty pounds laid by for you, and when that is gone then God will provide!" And so I know He will, for God will grant me to die before what my brother left for me is gone! but I could not tell about Lucy, for he had not mentioned her, except to leave her his blessing, and his prayer that she would not leave me!'

'Do you wish to die?' asked Antonia.

'Yes, I do, because he is dead! but death has no brightness to me, as it had for him; and this keeps me afraid that I may not go where he is. He sometimes asked me if I would not come and listen while he told me what it was made him happy; but I was too utterly miserable,—I could not bear him even to be willing to leave me. I could not bear to think he was going to die! I always turned away when he spoke of that; and then he would clasp his hands, and look upward, and pray.'

'Then you don't know how it was he found comfort?'

'Yes; he found it in his Bible, which he took to reading soon after we went to that village, and in the visits of the clergyman there; but it then seemed to me we had been very happy without all that before, and I could not see why we wanted it then, for then he was well. Once, when he was dying, he said to me, "O Edith," he said, "I had taught you all else, and at first I believed you would learn this, too, from me; but this truth is holy, and I am sinful; God Himself must be your teacher, my sister!" I did not like it then; but I have often thought of it since, for I am sure he had something that I know not of. "Once," he said to me, "all my thought in that distant land was to bring you to England, that if I died, as I always felt I should, in my youth, I might not leave you an exile: but now all my thought is to leave you—not to England, but to Heaven!" and he told me to take his Bible for mine when he was gone, and I should find it all there.'

'Have you looked for it all in his Bible?' asked Antonia.

'No; I have been only miserable. I could not look for anything when he was gone.'

'But the Bible would have led you to the Friend who gave peace to your brother—to JESUS—the one only Friend, who has borne all our griefs, and carried our sorrows. He would have taken the burden of your misery Himself, and poured into your heart the balm of His love; it was He who did this for your brother, in the suffering of death, and the sorrow of leaving you alone.'

'I could not understand his being willing to leave me: I should have been miserable if I had had to die and leave him!'

'But when you think of it now, would it comfort you if he had been wretched in death, instead of going in such peace to his God?'

'O, no! it would have killed me if he had been wretched, and I could not have comforted or saved him! I am thankful to God that he was happy! But I am not happy; and this makes me fear I shall not go where he is.'

'But you will be happy if you will only look for happiness where he found it.'

'O, I am too wretched and too faint at heart to be able to stir a step, or put out a hand, or even lift up one look in search of comfort! O! it is as I said,—*desolation is death!*'

'Then, if you cannot even try to find it, only listen to me, and you will believe that there is a blessed hope of life and love coming to you.'

Antonia took from her bag her own little Bible, and read of Jairus' daughter:—"My daughter is even now dead; but come, lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live." 'He who laid His hand on the ruler's dead daughter,' said Antonia, 'is now drawing near to you:—I hear Him! I see Him! I feel His approach! and even in *desolation's death* you can believe that He is able and willing to come to the desolate, the dead! He has proved it by coming and drinking our cup of misery and of death to the dregs.'

The mourner was silent. Antonia spoke again:—'You feel unable to go to Him,—unable to put out a hand to take

hold of His,—unable to look up,—but can you not sigh to Him, and say, "O Saviour, I cannot come to Thee! I beseech Thee, have mercy, and come Thyself unto me!"'

Antonia left the stranger, but it was not long before she visited her again. She read then from Isaiah,—"I have seen his ways, and will heal him. I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him."

Day after day Antonia breathed, unasked and unasking, some short utterance of the word that can quicken the dead. It could not be in vain. He who binds up the broken-hearted, and healeth the stroke of their wound, is the same "who confirmeth the word of His servant, and performeth the counsel of His messengers;"—found by the weary who had sought Him not,—He gave her the water of life—she drank, and thirsted no more; He spoke to her heart—she believed, and entered into rest; He bid her look unto Him—she looked, and was lightened.

She still took her long and lonely walks, but they became communings with Heaven, now that Love—infinite, eternal Love—beamed through Nature's smile around her.

Once Antonia asked her if she would not let her take her alone in the pony carriage to the Alpine church on the Sunday; but she said, 'O! do not ask me! I only go in lonely places; I cannot face the world again. I have seen another world, which I am not afraid to enter.' Then, repeating Antonia's once-uttered words, she said with a

smile, 'Death is not dreary to me now. Once I longed for it in its dreariness, now I wait for it in its joy.'

Antonia still pleaded, but the stranger said. 'Do not urge it: the possibility was lost before I saw your smile of tenderness.'

'How lost?'

'I meant to spare you the pain of knowing that the village all believed me mad. I was told it was Miss North who gave the impression; and all believed that she must know. Once, when I met her, I felt impelled to tell her the cruel wrong she did me, but courage failed me, and I could only hurry on. I had thought before that I knew what the world was: for when we lived in London my brother was always trying to make friends for me. I saw many homes then, friends of my father's, and friends my brother made; and I saw brothers in those homes; but, oh! they were too selfish, cold, indifferent, for me to have called them brothers! When we left London, I never wished to live in the world again; but it was here, in misery's depth, I had to feel how cruel that world could be. I had come a stranger here, because I could not pay the rent of my little house, and Lucy knew this lodging. I had taken it for six months, because it made the rent less; therefore, when I heard that cruel charge against me, I could not rush away, so I vowed myself to solitude,—a sinful vow; but Heaven had mercy on me, and sent an angel messenger to lighten its eternal gloom. Earth asks no more of me, nor I of it: with you and my poor maid I trust myself until I enter where no heart is cold, no lips are cruel.'

Antonia answered tremblingly, 'Indeed, my cousin did not mean to be unkind. She wishes to be good to all.'

'Wishes are vain,' replied the stranger, 'if they do not influence the life. Your wishes were living realities. Perhaps you little thought, when you wrote those few lines with the first flowers you brought, that they were to save a fellow-creature. I had heard the cruel falsehood, and was withering under it. Then came the flowers, and the words more lovely far to me. The flowers alone might have been left to beguile my madness, but I felt you would not write to one whom you believed bereft of reason; and it seemed, in the fearful poise of my awful despair, that one token was sent to save me.'

The winter came. Antonia's love, and the General's and Mrs. North's generous care, kept warmth in every form around the young frail stranger, but she would still take her long and lonely walks; she said that Nature alone with Heaven was earthly life to her; that if she could not have it, she felt she could not live; but her cough deepened and grew heavy, and her form wasted away. No one now thought the dying stranger mad; her hurried step was slower, and her frightened glance was softened into peace. Old Allen, the head gardener, always saved some fruit and flowers from his best stores for her, and took them down himself. The good, kind Chetwind every day provided something to tempt the failing appetite; and though she knew she should not see the stranger who by her care was fed, still she was always glad when she could take the delicacy down herself, and cheer her faithful maid. Mrs. Barrington wrote herself to

beg the dying stranger to come and try the air of her warmer southern aspect; but she would be only where she was, and would see no one but Antonia. A general interest was excited in the village. One feeling pervaded all. So it is,—so it must ever be on earth,—a multitude will follow where one alone has led the way. A word is a winged seed,—none can tell when once it has gone forth what its harvest may be. Anastasia might well have learned a lesson for a lifetime. It is probable that she never could utter the same supposition again; but the root from which it sprang she sheltered still under astonishment how people could be so insane as to let the poor creature hear a mere common-place remark uttered without a thought of its ever reaching her.

'Dear Antonia,' said the stranger, 'I had last night a heavenly dream! and yet it was of earth. I thought I was all alone on a wide, waste common, but I did not feel afraid, because all round me grew a thickly-planted, strong, green hedge, so that it seemed nothing could come in through it to hurt me, nor I get out from it to lose my way. Then I felt safe and happy; but presently I looked, and a great breach was made in that close sheltering hedge, and I felt no longer safe or happy, and only looked for danger and distress. But then I saw some one coming from the clouds, and I knew it was the Son of Man; and he came towards me, calmly descending, with only a staff in His hand, and He alighted on the earth, and stood beside the open breach that had been made in that green hedge around me, and touched the vacant space with the staff He held, and there sprang up a crimson rose-bush,

all in blossom,—so beautiful it was! the deepest crimson glowing among its leaves of green, more beautiful than any rose I ever saw, and it filled all the vacant space. And then I saw that many other gaps were round me in that hedge, and I defenceless on all sides; but I no sooner saw those other breaches made than there sprang up in each this rose-tree, until it bloomed around me everywhere,—all beauty, and all fragrance indescribable. Then I heard a voice that spoke to me: it spoke and said, "The rose-tree is the love of God, filling up the breaches in the circle of our human affections." Oh, then I was happy—happier than I ever felt before; and I think it will last, because the dream was sent from Heaven.'

One Sunday, after the service, Chetwind went down to the village to inquire for the stranger. The report was, better: her cough had been quiet, and the sleep of the night almost unbroken.

Antonia went on the Monday up to the little chamber, where the dying stranger sat in an arm-chair Mrs. North had sent her, by the uncurtained, opened casement; the soft western breeze, fragrant from the sea of blossoms it had traversed, breathed upon her brow. She looked upon Antonia, but did not speak. Her maid whispered, 'She slept all night, and still keeps quiet, as you see her now.'

Antonia sat beside her, and presently gently repeated the words, "The Lord shall comfort Zion. He will comfort all her waste places. He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness

shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody. . . . . Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

The dying stranger seemed to listen, and presently said, 'I have not been alone.'

'Who has been with you?' asked Antonia.

'I don't know, for my eyes are dim; but the music was very sweet. I don't think they will leave me any more. I should not like them to go.'

Antonia turned away, hiding her farewell tears.

'Will you call my poor Lucy now to lay me down? I should like to sleep.'

Lucy was there, and she laid her young mistress gently, as a mother could her child, upon her dying pillow. Then looking up, the stranger said, 'Kiss me, my angel friend! I shall hear that music in my sleep. I heard it all last night. Will you sit by me for a little while, that I may see you when I wake?'

Antonia stooped and kissed the pale brow, from which all shade of sorrow had passed quite away, and as she did so, she whispered, "He giveth His beloved sleep." At that low sound the dying stranger looked up once more, and answered, "God is love!" then slept the sleep that gently lengthened into death.

They bore her to her brother's grave. The General, Antonia, her faithful maid, and Chetwind, they laid her coffin

on the one where slept her brother; and on his tomb-stone carved her name; her age they did not know, but they put the day of her death, and underneath it her last words,—"God is love!" Allen, the gardener at the Hall, intrusted to Chetwind's care a crimson rose-tree and a white feathery broom to plant beside the grave.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In the autumn of the previous year Laura had been with her parents to the sea, and when she returned the snow had covered all the ground, and her gardening work was done. She visited the Grange on the day after her return, to look whether her orders for matting up plants, &c., had been attended to; and, then, having taken a sorrowful farewell of that year's delight, she called at the house to see Mrs. Barrington, who invited her to stay and spend the day with her. Laura stayed most gladly, for she felt spiritless with the one charm of life buried under the snow. Mrs. Barrington had expected this, and she waited in hope to lead this poor child of earth another step onward and upward; but she left her free to breathe her own feelings spontaneously.

Mrs. Barrington was seated near a sunny southern window, working her silk embroidery, the St. Bernard dog reposing near his mistress, and the wood-fire glowing brightly on the hearth. Laura sat in the window-seat, looking out with listless regret on the snow.

'I suppose I must be miserable now until the spring comes back again. Not even you can tell me of any interest in place of the flowers!'

Mrs. Barrington was silent.

'Could you?' asked Laura.

'I do not see that the case need be so hopeless. Could you not extend your acquaintance with Nature by making a winter study of the trees and the birds? The winter and early spring are the best time for becoming familiar with both. Would you not like to cultivate an acquaintance with the trees? to know them, each one by their difference of structure, bark, and foliage? Solomon knew every tree, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall, and you certainly ought not to be a stranger to those that grow around your home. And as to the wild birds, you might find in them a circle of friends. Their animated life could not fail to charm you when once you had turned your attention to them; their different habits and varied notes, with the interest perpetually arising when your sympathies are extended to any portion of God's wonderful works in creation, might beguile the winter and early spring, I should think, very pleasantly.'

'So it might, and I like the idea, but these long winter evenings! Papa reads the papers, and mamma has always some dull story-book, exactly like the one that came before it, where all the people get into scrapes for the sake of getting out of them, and I am tired to death with the sight of them.'

'Then, it seems you are free to follow your own devices. I should advise you to find some books of natural history, and read of an evening on the subjects that interest you in the day. If you get a knowledge of the trees and birds of your own neighbourhood you will find the winter will pass quickly away,

and leave you with fresh and permanent interest around you; and if you want more variety you can add the stars.'

'O, no; I always hated astronomy! A look is all I can ever give the stars.'

'But that look may be an ignorant or an intelligent one. You would not prefer to look up in ignorance?'

'I hate astronomy! those endless calculations, numbers without number, of which one has no more conception when one has learned every fraction than before one ever heard them reckoned up.'

'But astronomy is not a science of mere figures; you may leave its figures alone if they are so entirely objectionable. Can you not imagine any possible interest in knowing the name of each star, when you look up to those spangled skies at night, its place in the heavens, its rising and setting? And though the constellations are fanciful arrangements, yet they each form a naturally associated group that you find always in companionship. Would you have no interest in calling them all by their names—though those names be earthly alone—and watching their silent magnificent march across the sky? If you think you would, you may bring your books, and use my celestial globe when you like, that I may be at hand to show you how much of wonderful interest there is without any necessity of recollecting numbers. Can you not think it possible that the stars of the heavens might in winter take the place of the flowers of the earth, with all their variety in lustre, in size, and in arrangement?'

'Yes, I can suppose they might, if they can be learned

without any necessity of numbers,—trees, birds, and stars, while the flowers are asleep! It sounds well; they all seem in harmony, and if I may only have your interest while I am learning to know them, then I think I could persevere—even if the subject were a dull one!'

'You have my interest, my dear child, in yourself and therefore most surely in all your pursuits; and I do not think you will find either of the subjects we have spoken of unattractive, when once you begin to learn from Nature herself, instead of the pages of books alone.'

Laura found that the knowledge resulting from a personal observation of Nature is a knowledge that carries the heart along with it, and so proves a ceaseless refreshment. With the stars, the trees, and birds, for her companions, she could wait on in something like patience for the flowers.

'I have enough now for both winter and summer!' Laura said, when spending a winter's day with Mrs Barrington, and looking out in hope of a clear evening for the stars.

'Have you?' Mrs. Barrington asked earnestly.

'Yes, have I not?'

'Does a love of creation, then, satisfy you, without a love of its beneficent Creator?'

'I cannot love what I do not know!'

'But may you not learn to know him? Have you not His own revelation of Himself in His Word?'

'I did read the Bible sometimes this last summer, because I knew it was the rule of your life; but I could not understand it, and so at last I gave it up.'

'Did you try to find in it anything to *love?*'

'No, I tried to understand; I could not love without understanding.'

'Could you not? I think you could. The best way of understanding all true and beautiful things is by the love of the heart, not the investigations of the head alone. *You* do not understand the structure of the flowers, yet your love makes you feel that you understand *them*, because they are so beautiful, and brighten earth to you!'

'But the Bible is only words!'

'Words it is, but not words "only," for those "words are spirit and life." Go back to them, and ask them to speak to you once more, and listen whether they have no tones of tenderness, such as you never heard from human lips? no records of a love that can win back your heart in return? no whispers of hope telling of brighter things than spring flowers? You have a heart to love,—have you not?'

'O, can you doubt that?'

'No, I do not doubt; I only want to win that heart to the Bible. Find out what the Bible has to show you that you can look on with love. God, who gave you a heart to love His creation, is able and willing to give you a heart to love Himself. The love of creation leaves you a child of earth; the love of God will raise you into a child of Heaven; the one fades away with the world to which it belongs, the other has its home in the skies. "The world passeth away, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."'

Towards the spring of the year Mrs. North, accompanied

by Anastasia, called one day at the Grange, when, on inquiring for Mrs. Barrington, the servant said his mistress did not see any visitors for a few days. Mrs. North asked whether Mrs. Barrington were well, and receiving the assurance that she was well, left her card without making any further inquiry.

'What can it be?' exclaimed Anastasia, as they drove away. 'Some bad tidings, I suppose, but the house is not closed! the illness of a friend perhaps, or perhaps some reverse of fortune, for I know Mrs. Barrington has property independent of this estate. I suppose, mamma, you will write and inquire?'

'No, certainly not.'

'It will hardly seem friendly—will it?—to take no notice.'

'Mrs. Barrington will see my card, and as she is not ill she can respond to it by writing, if she wishes any immediate communication.'

'Well, really, I cannot wait so patiently when friends are suffering.'

'But we do not know that Mrs. Barrington is suffering, and it is no act of friendship to intrude upon a guarded retirement. It will be well for you, Anastasia, to be aware that there are times when even friends may not be wished for: if you thrust yourself forward at all times, you will never retain the friendship of the true and deep-hearted. Friendship commands a reverence of approach due to its sacred character.'

On the evening of that day, Mrs. North received the following note from Mrs. Barrington,—

'My dear Mrs. North,

'I felt sorry, on seeing your card, that I had delayed for a single day to communicate to you the cause of my temporary seclusion. You will, I know, be glad to learn that it is not the retirement of sorrow, but of joy. My friend, whom I have sometimes named to you, is on her homeward voyage with her husband, and about this time expected to arrive. The sudden tidings have unnerved me, for the chords that have often vibrated deeply beneath sorrow's pressure, tremble hardly less intensely at the touch of joy. I feel unable to meet the outward world until the one overpowering feeling is softened into something more of calm. But whenever you may be able to call again, I shall not feel unequal to see you.

'Yours most sincerely,

'Jane Barrington.'

Mrs. North instantly replied to the note; but did not hastily repeat her call.

The day after the receipt of this note by his mother, Captain North was walking away from the Hall with Edward Seymour, who had been calling there, and the Captain asked, 'Have you seen Mrs. Barrington lately?'

'I have not spoken to her for the last week; but she was at church on Sunday. Why do you ask?'

'I thought it possible you might not have heard that Mrs. Barrington had declined receiving all visitors for a time, having just received tidings of the unexpected arrival of a long absent friend.'

'I am glad you told me; I will go up there at once.'

'I will walk with you; but you will probably have only to leave your card.'

'O, no!' replied Edward Seymour, with the firm, but gentle assurance of one who knew his heavenly authority and power,—'I shall not be denied, for joy when intense needs the ministry of Heaven, no less than intensity of grief —both alike ask for calming, for sanctifying, for blessing from above!'

The Captain, as he afterwards related this to Antonia, added, 'I looked at him as he spoke—so young, and yet so assured in the blessed commission that he bore. I felt as if I could have bent my knee before him there, and asked his pastoral benediction; but he walked on in the same easy converse as before, as though the lofty tone he had breathed was as natural to him, in its place, as any other passing expression. I left him at the door, for he was admitted directly, and when I saw him again he said nothing as to his visit, so of course I was silent; but I felt how reverence was won—not by the office so much as by the spirit that breathes through it!'

In the course of a few days Mrs. North called again at the Grange. On taking a seat beside Mrs. Barrington, she was struck with the expression of chastened joy that beamed from her countenance. Mrs. North had felt that countenance before intellectual, commanding, full of feeling—the shade of past sorrows giving depth to its light; but now there was no mistaking the change in its aspect—it had kindled into joy! Mrs. North felt surprised at this sudden contact with

a glow that her own spirit seemed no longer capable of. Her garland of home-delights was unbroken, not one flower had faded, but the chords of her spirit thrilled no longer, the sorrow or the joy were things of weight, the more vivid vibrations were gone, and she looked with surprise as she saw the radiance of feeling beaming from the eyes that met hers. She could not ask, How is this? but if she could so have asked, some angel guardian in attendance might well have replied, 'The "Harp" of your being, with its "thousand strings," was devoted, until of late, to the world; the discords of earth have untuned and deadened it, the demands of this world have worn it; but the Harp of her being, who is now before you, has had its long abiding place in the presence of the Eternal; His hand has retuned its chords when unstrung or broken, and kept them so keenly responsive that influences, scarce perceptible to many, will wake them into fulness of expression. But you have now found the presence, that she has made her refuge through a lifetime, and if only you yield up your spirit entirely to the influence of that Divine presence, you will yet know what it is to recover the lost power of delight; and the tones of your spirit will be retuning here, to echo back with greater power through eternity the thrilling harmonies of Heaven.'

Mrs. Barrington told Mrs. North that she was going up to London to the residence of the father of her friend to meet her there, adding, 'My friend says, "Would that the first night I pass on shore might be the one from which I awake to expect your arrival!" I hope it may be so, for I find the

vessel is not likely to be in for some days. And gladly could I go and pitch my tent upon the shore, and watch for the first distant speck in the horizon telling of her vessel's near approach.'

Laura, finding that Mrs. Barrington had declined receiving visitors, refrained from entering her favourite garden, lest her presence there might be felt an intrusion; but after Mrs. North's received visit, a note came to Laura:—

'My dear Laura,

'I shall be as glad as ever to see you among the flowers, though I am unable at present to receive you within. I miss the sight of your form where I have long loved to see it; so continue your pastime at pleasure. While I am alone at the Grange you never need hesitate to come when so disposed.

'Yours affectionately,

'Jane Barrington.'

So Laura was again among her flowers, where she received a kind farewell from Mrs. Barrington the day before Mrs. Barrington left for London.

Laura worked indefatigably in Mrs. Barrington's absence, with the hope of surprising, by the brightness of the garden on her return. Leonore had been sharing her labours one day, and, pleasantly tired with their gentle toil, they sat down together on a bench, beneath the dark pine-trees, with the verdant lawn and the early blossoming flowers before them; far away the landscape stretched in its beauty to the purple horizon; and Laura and Leonore rested in the shade.

They rested there in the stillness of evening, with the birds in full song all around, and the gardening-man watering the flowers, until at length Laura said,—

'I have often thought I would talk to you, Leonore; but it is not easy to speak of things that once were all uncared for,—the Bible I mean, and the love that one finds like a deep ocean within it, when once one has taken the plunge! And, O Leonore, a life like mine, that was so cold and hard —to feel the rock within a smitten thing, and love's deep waters flowing forth to Heaven and Earth—it is, it is a new existence!'

Leonore could understand better than she could answer; but her look replied, and Laura soon spoke again:—

'Antonia used to be often trying to win me from myself to Heaven. I always listened to her, for I felt she was all real; but I thought her all too angel-like for me ever to be one with her! But this winter I read the Bible in a way I never read it before, looking for what I could *love!* and with prayer *for a heart of love!* And one day I was reading of Jacob at Bethel, and his vision as he slept on the stone—of the ladder that reached up to Heaven—and it suddenly struck me, how many steps there were on that ladder, and that even I might perhaps be taught to climb to the lowest; and that then if I could only stand on the lowest step, and never leave it, but cling to that ladder, those ministering angels would find me there, and would bear me up into Heaven. O Leonore, it was the first breaking of hope, through the dark skies that hung over my head! I had al-

ways loved Antonia from a distance, and sometimes I had wept bitter tears at the thought how soon our paths in life might part asunder, and what different work here, and, as I feared, what different worlds awaited us! But still it never seemed possible even to try and be like her; but when I saw how that ladder seemed to have a place also for me—a lowest step as well as a highest—and all on the way up to Heaven, then Hope broke on my heart, and it has made all things look new to me, it seems to have touched all things around me with love and with life! And I wanted to tell you a secret thought that I have. Papa, you know, is so fond of the sea, that he is sure to go to it this autumn, and I thought I should most likely be able to persuade him to go where you went when you found Bill Briggen; and then if Mrs. North would but let you go with us, we might find his poor widow, and see how she was getting on; but we need not say anything yet, only I wanted to tell you that we might ask of God that if it pleases Him it may be!'

'O Laura, how glad I am! how happy this evening makes me!'

'It makes me happier to have talked to you, Leonore,—freer and happier. And you cannot think what it would be in my selfish life—if my autumn hope should be fulfilled—to have at length the unspeakable feeling of having some power to make a fellow-creature happy, as I am sure it would make that poor widow if I could but take you to see her.'

'O, be glad then,' said Leonore, 'that all you have told me makes me so happy to-night!'

And the shadows of the pine-trees fell darkly, and the gardener was gone to his cottage, and the nightingale had taken up the song of the night, and Laura and Leonore walked to their homes, each one with their separate attendant.

Laura with a freer spirit; she had not only "believed with the heart," but "confessed with the lips," and so entered into the promises, whose first breathing of blessing is linked with faith and obedience, reaching on into infinite and endless fruition. Laura returned to her home—that home presented a different aspect now to what it had done in past years, care and thought for her parents, and gentle attentions to them, were now waking up in the life that from the days of her spoilt childhood centered in self. But while sympathy and love flowed around, and began to make fertile the path that she trod, the path she had entered was yet at the same time so narrow that each one who walks therein must tread it alone, alone with Him to whose Heaven it leads; so narrow that he who chooses to lean on any other helper than God, will find he had to leave that pathway to do so. In all lowliness of heart it must be entered, and Laura had entered it so, looking up and asking all from the God, who is Love. She saw the bright goal at the end of the way; she heard the voice of Him who said, "Follow me!" Sometimes she stumbled and fell, but He whom she followed raised her up again. Sometimes the path lay in darkness before her, but she waited asking for light, and it came. She felt the sharp thorns that strew the pathway of life; but He whom she followed had passed over them first

and pressed their keenest points down before her. For her, the sun went down no more, for all things lived in the light that is eternal; and the efforts of her heart were directed to shed around the influence of that love, which is Blessing!

CHAPTER XIX.

It was her earliest friend whose return to this country, after so long an absence, Mrs. Barrington was now almost immediately expecting. She had been the elected and chosen when childhood had as yet scarcely deepened into youth, that first early love holding unwaveringly on, blending each interest, and sorrow, and joy, with itself. Whether near or distant, still hastening to associate all subjects of thought, all tides of emotion, even all impulse of feeling, with that one responsive being, inseparably linked to the heart in life's unfolding years. Yet other friends were not the less loved because one held a place from the first entirely her own; the large heart is but still more enlarged by the strong hold of a deep personal tie; it is itself deepened and enriched by reciprocation, and has more to offer than it otherwise could have possessed or poured out to all those who, in their varied degree, might be capable of winning its love or its sympathy; while towards the one whose spirit through life has been blended in deep and ceaseless companionship, the interwoven tie becomes a second consciousness.

The painting, which has been mentioned as adorning the walls of the old moated Grange, pictured to the eye the form

of that long-absent, now home-returning friend, and her radiant child. Approaching separation shaded there that mother's face with a deep melancholy tenderness. The agonizing long farewell had followed, and years had rolled away. Now she waited for the first returning look upon her child. As the time and distance lessened, each moment seemed to expand to longer duration, and the intervening space to swell to almost endless measurement. Once, when a little land-bird lighted on the ship, the mother looked at it as if she thought it might have crossed the pathway of her child! O, the questionings, the heart yearnings, the undefined thoughts and imaginings in the heart of the yet distant mother, the bright hopes, the trembling fear of change—less of loveliness than the all that memory has cherished, the faintness of the soul that in suspense weighs all! The child has no such shadows to trouble her bright forward glance; she has one memory of the past, and that one memory—Love;—one expectation of the future, and that one expectation—Love! Little knows or dreams the child of all that hangs around her life's opening years to awaken a mother's questioning. She little reasons, nothing dreads, only longs in trembling joy for the hour and the moment which each day is bringing nearer.

The child of whom we tell bore the name of her mother's earliest friend—England's classical, and time-hallowed name of Jane. When her parents left her, they left her to the guardianship of her mother's only brother. He occupied the family estate, an old castellated mansion with its park around it, on the immediate outskirts of a large country-town. He

had offered to receive his sister's child, and to bring her up with his own girls under their mother's care; to his house her parents took her before leaving England.

'Have you no wishes to express with reference to your child?' asked the child's guardian of her mother.

'No; my only refuge is in absolute trust; I trust her to my God, and you. She has a high, wild spirit; you will not break but bend it—not bind, but win by love; without this confidence I could not leave her.'

The poor child in the hour of parting clung around her mother's neck, as if resolved not to unlock her clasping hands.

Closely and long her mother's arms embraced her, then that mother gently said,—'O my child, there is but One who never parts from those who cling to Him—thy Saviour! Thy mother gives thee to Him: turn now to Him, my child, and He will never leave thee.'

Gently as the words were breathed, so gently did the trembling child unlock her clasping fingers, and saw her mother go. But months had passed over her before her infant spirit rallied from that stroke of separation.

The vessel was not due for some days when Mrs. Barrington left home, but she wished to spend a day or two in the neighbourhood where the child of her friend had been brought up; it was years now since she had seen her, and she felt intensly anxious to know on what that mother's eye was soon to gaze—on what that mother's heart was soon to rest.

Not being intimate with the family where Jane had resided, Mrs. Barrington had not written before-hand, and pre-

ferred going to an hotel in the town to being a guest in the house. On calling the next morning, she found that, yielding to Jane's irrepressible anxiety, her uncle and aunt had started with her the previous day for the seaport at which the vessel was to arrive. Mrs. Barrington saw the lady, who was living as a governess in the family, and who, finding that Mrs. Barrington intended to remain that day at the hotel, pressed her to come up and spend the evening with the children of the family, to which Mrs. Barrington consented.

A clergyman and his wife, residing in the town, were known to Mrs. Barrington, and she called on them in her way back to the hotel. Mrs. Barrington was the last person to question a comparative stranger on subjects on which information would be, probably, little more than report. But the individual upon whom she now called seemed to have no topics at command except such as were furnished by her opinion of the characters and doings of the people of the neighbourhood. She soon asked Mrs. Barrington whether she knew Jane Trevenon, this inquiry was made in connection with the subject of her parents' return.

'I knew her well as a child,' Mrs. Barrington replied, 'but it is some years now since I have seen her.'

Then over the face of her who had asked the question passed an expression in which it would have been probably impossible to trace any feeling of *Heaven*,—no tenderness, no sorrow, no compassion, was in it; it seemed a mixture of indifference, almost of contempt, and of hopeless condemnation, as she said,—

'I fear her poor mother is not much to be congratulated on her daughter!'

'Indeed!' said Mrs. Barrington, repressing the overpowering anxiety which these words awakened.

'She is as wild and ungoverned a girl as I suppose you could possibly meet with; reckless of what she does and what she says. My wonder is, that her uncle and aunt can allow her the liberty they do; she may be seen out in the earliest morning alone, with a huge foreign dog that no one dare approach except its keepers and herself, feeding wild horses and unbroken colts. I suppose they cannot keep her in, but I think I should if she were under my care!'

'What!' thought Mrs. Barrington as she left the house, 'is all the lovely promise of that childhood lost in wild, ungoverned recklessness?' and heavily oppressed she returned to the hotel. There was no one to remind her of what she would have reminded any one except herself, that it is a day of hasty estimates; careless eyes coldly glance upon the exterior, then pronounce sentence, and that sentence soon passes as current coin; false coinage too often, and for the loss incurred, and the evil produced by it, the calculator will never have skill to account. And Christian hearts and Christian homes give evidence of the fact when their estimates are as narrow as if light from above had never illumed their minds, their judgments as harsh or as cold as if love divine had never beamed on their souls. But no one was at hand to remind Mrs. Barrington of this fact, well known, but lost sight of in that moment of personal distress; and she went in solitude

to dwell upon the grief imparted by the words of one who, having expressed her opinion, thought no more at that time on the subject.

The afternoon came, and Mrs. Barrington fulfilled her engagement, but with a heavy burdened heart. She had always kept up a correspondence with Jane, but could not fall back upon anything which her letters unfolded in confirmation of what she had heard; they had been short, original, and rather wild, but warmly affectionate and natural; she was yet but young, and Mrs. Barrington had always felt that writing, probably, was not with her a favourite employment. Most gladly would she have learned to know her through personal intercourse, but various incidental circumstances had rendered this impossible. Engrossed with the anxious subject, she entered the home of Jane's youth, and was received by the same agreeable-looking lady as before.

Mrs. Barrington, too anxious now to be able to repress inquiry, soon spoke of Jane, and was asked, in reply,—

'How long is it since you have seen her?'

'Not since her childhood; indeed only once since her parents left England, and that was immediately after my own return to this country.'

'O, yes, I think I remember; you will find her altered since then, but it is hardly fair to attempt to describe her to one so deeply interested in her as you must be. I think you rather ought to wait and judge for yourself.'

'I should entirely agree with you,' replied Mrs. Barrington, her confidence immensely deepened in the individual

with whom she conversed; 'but at this moment I am extremely anxious to hear your feeling about her.'

'Well, really, you may at least expect an impartial estimate from me, for I must say she does me no credit, or rather I should say, owes nothing to me. She learns in some way, but how I am sure I cannot tell you, for I have seldom been able to keep her in the schoolroom two hours at a time. Her uncle and aunt indulge her to the utmost; she has her own way in everything.'

'Has indulgence made her selfish?'

'Selfish! O no; it really would be impossible to tell you what the sweetness of her disposition is. I had a most trying illness not long ago,—an illness in which it was very difficult to be patient myself, and for others to be patient with me. I may literally say she was my *nurse*, and what her nursing was no one could attempt to tell. But it is not on great occasions alone; she is the loved of all, for hers is the quickest eye to read every want, every wish; and though so untaught, hers is always the most skilful hand to meet every demand, whatever it may be; and as to her light step, it seems everywhere, just when and where most wanted. I am sure, while others think they do well to receive you kindly in the room, she will meet you, in her eager gladness, before you can enter. If her aunt has only been out for a walk, Jane is certain almost to meet her at the threshold, and her voice of welcome to be the first sound that she hears. I ought not, perhaps, to say it, but I really believe

her uncle and aunt would miss her more than any one of their own children.'

Mrs. Barrington could not question,—she could only listen; and the true-hearted woman, warming with her subject, went on: 'I daresay some would call her wild; she is as free as air, says just what she feels, and does not seem to mind giving offence; and yet I do not know that she ever does give offence, excepting to those who choose to judge harshly of all that they cannot understand. Her words, certainly, are wild and free, but they are the truest to her own heart, and the kindest to the hearts of others, that I ever heard from the lips of any age. And as to her voice, when she sings there is a melody in its tones, that as they rise and rise subdues and almost saddens you; and her touch in music is such that even ears untaught and unaccustomed to judge say they can distinguish it from all others.'

'O tell me all you can!' said Mrs. Barrington.

'Well, I am sure, I hardly know what to tell you, unless I came to incidents, and they would be endless; but one I may mention which has recently come to our knowledge. A young friend of her cousin's has lately died; she was much older than Jane, but once in travelling with the family she and Jane shared a room at the inn; it was only one night, but that night seems to have impressed her for life. She said they were both extremely tired, Jane quite knocked up; but she saw Jane go to her portmanteau, find her Bible, and sit down and read in it before she would lie down to sleep; and this act of heavenly devotion so impressed her

companion that she never lost the impression, though Jane knows not of it. But, as I said, you must be with her before you can possibly understand what she is.'

Mrs. Barrington's thankfulness and joy rose the brighter and purer for the dark shadow from which they emerged, and she met the young family party with her genial benignity, and her most winning smile. The eldest daughter was absent from home on a visit, but the younger members of the family seemed pleased at receiving and entertaining their guest. Mrs. Barrington looked upon them with an added interest, as the daily companions of the child of her friend. There was one among the family group on whom her eye especially rested, though she possessed not the beauty of the younger children, nor the ready intellect of the elder ones. She kept in the background, as though not expecting to be noticed or appealed to, but Mrs. Barrington fancied that she should find in her much both of thought and feeling. She would gladly have talked with the child, but no opportunity was afforded for anything more than a passing remark. Evidently unused to be noticed by strangers, she had no general readiness of conversation at command. In the course of the evening Mrs. Barrington was informed that the elder children were going on a distant excursion with some friends the next day, but the three younger were not to be of the party, and Mrs. Barrington resolved to delay her next day's journey until the afternoon, and see the children again in the morning. She asked permission of their governess to be allowed to pay them another visit the next morn-

ing, when the schoolroom hours were over; and she asked the child, who had excited in her a feeling of interest, whether she would show her the gardens and old park during her visit, to which she gladly agreed.

When calling the next morning, Mrs. Barrington, while alone with the governess, made some inquiry that evidenced a feeling of interest in the silent child, to which the governess replied,—

'Yes; she is a good quiet girl, but there is not very much in her. It is singular that you should have noticed her, for she is perhaps the only one upon whom Jane's influence tells injuriously. The child is devoted to her cousin, always happy if she may walk with her; they are out together for hours sometimes, for her mamma never has the firmness to deny her when she asks to go with Jane; so that I fear she is in danger of acquiring all her cousin's idleness, without possessing any of her cousin's endowments.'

'Would you describe Jane as idle?' asked Mrs. Barrington, anxious on so important a point to ascertain the truth.

'No, certainly, I should not; but what is not idleness in her would become so in most others, and will, I fear, prove nothing better in her little cousin. It is a curious fact, that that child has not one natural gift, no taste nor talent for a single accomplishment, to prose on is all she can do.'

'What is she in disposition?' asked Mrs. Barrington.

'Very affectionate; but when once she gets wrong, it is very difficult, I assure you, to get her into a bright mood again, unless Jane comes in to the rescue, and then it is done in a moment.'

'Do not rank her too low,' said Mrs. Barrington pleasantly. 'A heart of unselfish love may be excused the want of some other endowments.'

The child then came in ready to accompany Mrs. Barrington; she held in her hand what looked like a very heavy stick.

'Are you going to carry that with you? I am afraid it will tire you.'

'No, thank you; it will not tire me. There are pleasant places without seats, and if I carry this you can sit down; it makes a camp-stool when opened, and I can sit upon the ground: I often do.'

So they went together. The child felt the secret link that another's interest can sometimes bind even on the youngest heart, and she did her best to make the walk agreeable. Mrs. Barrington longed to hear her speak of Jane, and rather expected her to do so, but the child made no allusion to her cousin.

At length, seated in a wild retired part of the park, where all the world seemed at a forgotten distance, a lake where the water-lilies floated before them, a mossy bank where the child sat by the camp-stool she had brought for Mrs. Barrington, and the whispering leaves around them, Mrs. Barrington asked,—

'Do you love your cousin?'

The child looked up, then words were little needed, but they were given. The tenderness of the questioner's soul had made itself felt, and that young heart knew what it was

to trust. She replied, 'O yes; things that love nothing else love her; all must love her!'

'Will you tell me all about her while we sit resting here?'

'No one could tell you *all*,' replied the child with an exactitude of truth, and an expression on her young face, that seemed to say, Jane was to her a world, whose measure and whose span she had not taken yet; but she added, 'I can tell you a great deal.'

'Tell me all you can,' said Mrs. Barrington.

'I daresay you would like to hear about our morning walks, because they are so beautiful. We get up while the dew is on the flowers, and the morning air is blowing fresh, and while the birds are singing, and all the town asleep; we go quite away from the town to the river side, and to the fields, and all over our old park. Lion, a great dog, goes with us; he is so fierce that he can only go out before the people are about, and no one except Jane, or his keepers, can take him out. I am terribly afraid of him. Sometimes when I am separated from Jane he comes rushing at me, but I call to her and she calls him; and the moment that he hears her voice, he tosses his great mane and turns away and bounds to her. Once he went so fast that when he sprang up in his play he knocked her down, and she lay senseless on the ground a little while, and all the time he would not move, but stood over her, looking down upon her face, and when she opened her eyes she saw his great red glaring eyes close to hers; and when she moved a little and got up, he

leapt about like a wild thing for joy, and after that he never sprang upon her in the same way again.'

'How is it that you get separated from Jane?'

'O, because she feeds the creatures where we go; she springs across the little streams, or walks over the stones, and over the banks where I could not even try to go, and the wild horses are so fond of her—young colts that are there come when they see her, and eat from her hand. She has a bird, and when she lets it fly it never will alight anywhere but on her head—never on any tree, only upon her head. She tames all wild things into love.'

'How is it she can tame them so?'

'I don't know, only she loves them all, and trusts them. She seems to have no fear of any living thing; and I do not know, but it seems to me they feel her love, and feel her trust. I am sure I do. When I make a mistake, or do a thing wrong, she always puts me right, and never laughs at me; when I get into trouble, she never seems to think that I meant to do wrong, and she always finds out a way to get me into happiness again; she tells me long tales, such long stories, they last on each one for weeks; and when we are alone she sings to me.'

'What does she sing to you?'

'A great many things. There is one song she often sings that begins, "She never blamed him—never." But I think the one she loves the best is a hymn; when she sings it, her voice ascends so high it seems almost as if it must be heard

above the sky. I know it is her favourite of all: I can say it if you like.

'"How vain are all things here below,
How false and yet how fair!
Each pleasure hath its poison too,
And every sweet a snare.

The brightest things below the sky
Give but a flattering light;
We should suspect some danger nigh
Where we possess delight.

Dear Saviour, let Thy beauties be
My soul's eternal food,
And grace command my heart away
From all created good."'

'Do you walk only in the early morning?'

'No; we often go out later in the day.'

'And where do you go then?'

The child looked down in silence; over her face passed shadows of thoughtful recollection. Mrs. Barrington saw that her thoughts were treading the secret sanctuary of hallowed places.

'Jane never talks of it,' at length she said, 'but she never told me not to tell; I think she trusts me, and I do not mind telling you. We go among the poor; we go to the worst places, where the poor lie dying; only a little bed, a wretched bed, and nothing more. O, how glad they are to see her, and she kneels down and prays for them to God, and sits and reads to them; and I go with her. And she speaks to the beggarmen, and is not afraid of them, and they all listen and look as if they liked to hear; but when we go among the

Jews, sometimes I am frightened then, and beg her to go away, but she only smiles.'

'What is it frightens you?'

'O, when we go to the Rabbi's house, and sit in his little back-parlour, and such dark-looking angry Jews stand round her, and she sits in the midst with her Bible, and looks up to them, and talks with them as if she could not be afraid. Sometimes they get so angry, and talk so loud, that I am terrified; but she keeps gentle still, and then they get quieter again, and I am less afraid, but I do dread going there, only I like to go wherever Jane goes.'

Mrs. Barrington could ask no more; but when in after-life she saw this young child raised to bring a ceaseless influence of blessing to bear upon her Country's poor, she and she alone, could trace back the expanding streamlet to its first earthly source,—the free, true, trusting soul of Jane.

The next day Mrs. Barrington completed her journey to London, and drove at once to make inquiries at the residence where her friend was expected. Her friend had arrived. A maid quickly appeared, saying, 'My mistress is expecting you, ma'am.' Mrs. Barrington followed her upstairs. A door was opened, and a form within, unchanged in its dignified beauty, turned a look as of listening expectation. At the sight of the one who entered, the colour fled from her cheek, a faint exclamation passed her lips, but the door closed, and the friends separated for so long met again under the eye of Heaven alone.

CHAPTER XX.

It was with ceaseless delight that Mrs. Barrington looked on the child of her friend. She would have been at no loss to understand the young character now open before her, had she not heard the testimony of others; but that testimony, being what it was, could not fail to give a deeper charm to all that she saw. In the bloom and the beauty of youth, her sympathies of soul ever ready as if waiting to turn to all that appealed to them, full of life's expanding power, and blending with all her wild freedom a hush of silent expectation, that in some of Earth's children seems an instinct of the deep solemnities of Time unfolding before us as the shadowy type of Eternity; such was Jane when her mother and her mother's friend met her again.

It is not possible to give a lengthened detail of this first season spent by Jane in London. Original, unfettered, and almost wild to the careless observer's eye, her whole life was yet entirely governed by the truth and love of her heart, and the native power of her mind. None could pass her by unobserved, most watched her with interest, many with love; but she courted no attention, she dashed back again all flattery, and though she seemed to steer almost recklessly on,

yet she never stranded on evil, folly, or untruth—never pained the true-hearted, never wounded the sorrowful. True to Heaven, and true to Earth, her kindness was genuine, and her bright course held safely on.

Jane spent the season with her parents at the residence of her paternal grandsire, whose married daughter, with her husband and family, resided with him. Jane's London cousins formed an enthusiastic attachment to her, but it was a love very different from the love of the young cousin she had left far away—the silent child who never told her love unless her eyes revealed it, never breathed a word of admiration—only was always happy at her side, and always comforted by her in sorrow. Never had Jane once checked that silent child—never spoken one word to her that the most sensitive of memories could think upon with pain; Jane's free tone was strengthening, and, whenever things went wrong, it only changed, for that young child, to encouragement or tenderness. But her London cousins met a rougher handling, which, if resented by them for the moment, was soon forgotten again in the ceaseless sunshine of Jane's bright spirit.

There was one in the home Jane had entered, who had been too little remembered in the midst of its gay, active life—the aged grandsire. It was true, he had his easy arm-chair in each apartment, he had his valet in constant attendance, and he was never put out of his way. But there he sat, in the partial deafness and weakness of age, left out of the question by the young family around him. There was cheerful conversation, and planning of pleasure, but all was

a confused murmur to him; he looked on the coming and going, but he knew not from whence or whither. His aid and his permission were necessary no longer, and the *selfish* heart forgets what it is not made to feel the want of. But blessing came for the grandsire with the light step of Jane. Her gentlest attentions were always tendered to him with the sweet reverence that the noblest youth always renders to age. There was no impatient look on her face at his questionings —no half-scream to his deafness, no attempt to escape from his imperfect apprehension of facts; the clear tones of her voice stole like music into his heart, and when he failed to understand all the bearings of the subject, he smiled responsively to her smile, and seemed satisfied because she knew and had tried to tell him. From the day that Jane entered the home, the aged grandsire was no longer passed over as a being forgotten.

The contrast did not please her cousins, and one of them, flinging impatiently away, exclaimed one day—

'What's the use of always bothering grandpapa?'

'Let truth speak,' replied Jane, with her changeless brightness, 'and then you will ask a very different question. I will write a satire, if you do not take care, one of these days, and put you all into the Temple of Truth!'

Jane would often take her book and read to herself near her grandfather's chair, and he would sit silently happy, quite satisfied in the sense of her gentle companionship; and she would look up, and give him sometimes a thought or a fact from the printed page, which he would be pleased to listen to,

and then leave him awhile in repose. By degrees, a light of wakeful interest beamed on his face again, and when anything was passing which he did not understand, he would look round for Jane, as though he felt that she was the one link between himself and the living world around. Happy mother of such a child! Blessed child, wherever thy lot may be!

Jane's London cousins were strangers to the claims of Earth upon the ministry of every human heart; they can hold no place of bright illustration; but one among them may be noticed because her character was in some points a counterfeit of Jane's, and the counterfeit is too often classed with the pure gold.

Rosetta was some years older than Jane, and in possession of all that a circle of the most fashionable society could offer her. It is not, however, her pursuits, but her character that we have to question. Rosetta lived in a world of imagination, untested by heavenly truth, unregulated by heavenly wisdom, ungoverned by heavenly love. The consequence was that she lived in a world of great shadows. At one interview you heard of a perfect hero; at the next you inquired with a feeling of interest, and found he had passed into the shade—was now a mere ordinary being or something less—and another giant stood up in his place. Her warmest friendships were not exempted from a transient duration. She had friends to-day who were first-rate, you heard of them in every letter and at every interview; but a few years passed, and they had retired into the back-ground—in disgrace? O no!

forgotten? O no! but not *necessary* in the intercourse of life any longer. The crown that once betokened their pre-eminence now gleamed for a time upon some more recently favoured. Over imaginary tales Rosetta sat in hopeless abstraction, in smiles and tears, as the case might require; but because the sorrows and joys of real life did not present on their surface all the hidden relations that the pen of the novelist brings to outward demonstration, they were, for the most, unrecognised; when the substance of grief or of joy presented itself, it could win neither the tear nor the smile that had flowed for the shadow. And so, giving her sympathies to shadows, her life itself became a shadow, filled to excess, it seemed, with endless interests and pursuits; but it held comparatively few that did not disappear when they had their little day, like a bubble in the air.

Jane's mother, talking earnestly once to Rosetta, said,—

'You will find some day that one of two things alone can make life real to you—pure Religion, or Sorrow; light from Heaven, or some withering blast of adversity—the light of truth and the day of evil are the two touchstones of Earth.'

But Rosetta liked her world as it was, and lives in the midst of it still—still deceived by the mirage of to-day, until, as life grows old, and the imagination's *untested* shaping and colouring grow dim, she must find herself in a dreary arena of space with no romance-heroes around her—no fascination in friends of to-day, no hope for any brighter dream of to-morrow; awaiting, in a heavy monotony, the near or distant appearance on life's stage of that one stern reality—Death!

Jane had come to London with the eager longing of England's loyal heart to see her country's Queen. Mrs. Barrington heard the repeated wish; it was the Easter recess, and she said, 'It shall be granted; we will go to Windsor, where we may see at least, perhaps, her shadow passing by!'

Jane was ready in the early morning's golden prime, with its spring-tide burst of light, and life, and song. The post-horses were at the door by seven o'clock, and soon Jane and her guardian friend had left the streets of the great city behind; and as Nature opened once more before them, and then closed around them, Jane's spirit rose in all the freshness of delighted exhilaration.

On reaching Windsor they breakfasted, then walked up to the Castle. Jane was hushed to silence with thrilling feeling. At the gates a little crowd was gathered, expecting the royal carriage.

'I shall touch my hat when the Queen comes,' said a little boy before them.

'I should think you will take your hat off!' said Jane.

The child turned and looked up. Then came the prancing horses, but the sovereign's face was turned away. The little boy raised both his hands, and lifting his round hat from off his fair Saxon curls, stood looking after England's monarch as if his reverence had been deepened for a lifetime.

Mrs. Barrington then ordered fresh horses, and they drove through the magnificent park. The buds of half its trees were gleaming in silvery lustre against the azure of that eastern sky. Mrs. Barrington said but little; she felt that the

young spirit at her side held a thrilling communion with all things around her, and to have been the one to lead her through such scenes of past and present association, was interest enough.

At Runnymede they stopped. Jane looked intently on the spot lost in the gathering memories of the past. Imagination pictured the scene when England's stalwart barons encamped on that long strip of grass-covered land, wrung from their king's reluctant hand the charter of England's freedom. Not Marathon itself could have more entranced the English eye that now first looked on Runnymede, for Grecian liberties had faded all away—her struggles were in vain. True freedom had no shrine on Lacedæmon's plains or the Athenian citadel, but England's pulse of liberty was beating still—for England's laws, and England's throne, owned the supremacy of that enduring Word that alone can make "free indeed."

'Let us tread the ground,' said Jane; 'to me it seems as if England's tented barons still were here, instead of only this spring-tide air wooing the flowers from its sod. Do let us tread the ground.'

They left the carriage, and walked a little while in silence there; then returning soon, saw again the palace towers before them. Jane did not like to pass the palace by, so the carriage was sent on, and they walked awhile upon the terrace. Then it was Jane saw the Queen.

'I can go now,' she said; 'I want nothing more except the earth and sky as we drive home to-day.'

A few weeks passed and Jane stood before the throne.

'A signal for the heart to beat less free are all imperial presences.' One look she raised to the calm brow that wore the diadem of rule extended as the earth's circumference, then pressed a trembling, fervent kiss upon the sceptred hand, passed, and was gone from thought and sense of all beside.

Jane would not live without the poor! In the daily drives she looked on every side, but saw them not: more than once she had stolen out alone to find them, but baffled and bewildered, she had returned in disappointment. The deep things of her heart were seldom on her lips—one reason why a surface glance could seldom read her truly; but at length, when with her mother and Mrs. Barrington she exclaimed, 'Where ARE the poor?'

'You shall see the poor,' Mrs. Barrington replied, 'when you come to my old ivied Grange.'

'But the poor are here,' replied Jane, 'and I will not live in splendour without them!'

An incident occurring at that moment put an end to the conversation. Mrs. Barrington felt anxious, for she read some final determination in Jane's tone. She did not question it, but secretly resolved without delay to meet and guard it. It was well she did, for Jane, disappointed in her appeal, had determined to search them out alone the next day, and not to return until she found them; and her settled purposes were not easily baffled.

Mrs. Barrington had an intimate friend in one of the aristocracy, whose life was a blessing to the poor; to him she applied, and he promised to call the next morning, and take

Jane to some of the houses of the poor. Mrs. Barrington added the caution, 'My young friend is one who wears a light-hearted exterior, but into whom all things sink deeply.'

'So much the better,' was the reply; 'there are too many into whom the sense of fellow-suffering sinks not at all, if some did not yield a degree of compensation, the earth must be swept from creation for the sin of insensibility. You must look upon all intensity of feeling as a salt, helping to preserve this corruptible Earth; but I am glad of your hint, and will be careful.'

The little brougham was early at the door the next day; Jane welcomed the invitation, and lightly rolled away the wheels that had borne rescue to thousands. As they conversed together, Jane said,—

'We seem to live here as if the poor were not in the same world with us.'

'Alas! alas!' her guide replied, 'we have lived so too long, but we are waking up now to the question asked nearly two thousand years ago, "Who is my neighbour?" waking up to see that neighbour perishing! but here we are at their dwellings; and, taking her from the carriage, they entered an alley, and Jane looked upon the poor—wretched, gloomy, and filthy, squatted down on the door-steps of miserable houses that rose high above them, leaning out from the windows with faces unsoftened by one gleam of feeling,—men lounging in idleness, with glances that boded only evil; children in rags, their young life being poisoned and blighted

beneath their baneful inheritance of crime, when it might have been budding and blooming in beauty and fragrance.

Jane shuddered, and for a moment stood appalled, and trembled on the arm that supported her. 'Oh, what children of misery!' she faintly exclaimed; and then with the free native instinct of her heart left the arm that had guided her, and turned alone to a door-step, where a woman sat weeping. Her guide turned to another group, and when he looked round again for Jane the woman's wailing had ceased, her face was raised to the one that bent over her; he caught not the words, but they seemed to make impression on the listener, and not on her alone, the presence of human sympathy was felt amongst the human beings there bound in the lowest depths of misery; a softened gaze had stolen over the louring eyes around; their gloom was perceptibly lightened. Jane's guide now waited in readiness to go. O, did not then some angel of mercy, hovering near them unseen, say, in tones not yet audible to earth, 'O, child of heaven, pass not so quickly away! Far hidden in these dwellings of misery, at this moment, there beats faintly one young broken heart. Could you but come to her, your voice would breathe blessing on the dying; she remembers well the tones of Divine truth and love. Could you but find her, it might be the opening of the prison to one that is bound. She was born far away, where the depths of the wild woods embosomed her home; where she woke at the carol of the birds, and sang her holy hymns in response; where the murmuring bee gathered honey from the thyme, and the primrose and violet

jewelled the glades; where Sabbath after Sabbath her young step dashed the dew-drop as she hastened with her Bible to the distant Sunday-school, conning aloud the record of love, to which angels stooped to listen as she hastened along. But now, in the hidden recesses of this wilderness of woe, she is fading away; she does not write to her mother; she thinks it would break her mother's heart to know all, and she would rather die uncared for than do that. You, could you reach her, might write on Earth's latest memory the record of human compassion, and illumine its last ray with a sunbeam from Heaven!' But no; our ears hear not yet the whispers of angels. She who to the utmost would have met the demand passed in unconsciousness away; but her influence lingered when her footstep was gone, and dark hearts around were left better disposed to whatever heavenly appeal might next follow.

From that hour Jane gave her heart to those children of misery. She would devote her time and thoughts to them, and seek to interest others for them. She would sit at her grandsire's knee, telling him of those children of misery, until the tear rolled down his cheek at the pathos of her words, and his purse was at his grandchild's disposal; but personal self-denial kept Jane always rich for the poor. And all the splendour that attends on the circles of wealth was attempered to Jane by the ceaseless remembrance of the dark haunts of misery and crime.

That dying daughter of sorrow—whom Jane might not reach—had she any comforter? No footsteps of friendship

drew near her. Her childhood's pastor had her in his heart; the time was not distant when he would trace her sad steps through those dark regions of crime, where ruffian lips would be constrained by the sudden surprise of a strange emotion to give evidence to him—standing alone, with his pastoral staff, fearless before them: guided from one to another, he will at length hear of her wrongs, her sorrows, her tears, but over her the grave had closed before the pastor drew near. No voice of earthly tenderness again fell on her ear, no hand of affection laid her dying head on its pillow,—but we grieve not for her. No crime stands recorded in her pathway of sorrow; she had been early trained in the way she should go; we trust she is gone where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Nor need we believe her dying moments unsoothed. It may have been, that when the stupor of death steeped her miseries in slumber, she heard sounds celestial, and thought them the songs of the wild birds that built their nests near her distant cottage home. It may have been, in the faintness of death, that she felt the waving of angel pinions, and thought it the breeze bending boughs of the forest-trees near her home; heard, it might be, the one human voice that alone can utter, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest;" turned to it, as though it were her mother's, and in that moment departed to find it His who has said, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Not for her do we grieve, but for those whom no man has taught, and who therefore know not the things

that belong unto their peace; for those who perish, and no man regardeth it.

We turn for a moment from topics that relate directly to the ministry of life to follow Jane on one occasion, which awoke all the vivid feelings of her soul.

It was the Sunday of the Holy Trinity, and Mrs. Barrington proposed to take Jane for the morning service to Westminster Abbey. Jane was in heart the child of England's Church, with no superstition, but a love devoted and true. They entered through the cloisters and nave to the choir; the Sabbath stillness shut them into the hush of devotional feeling. The pillars and pointed arches in every direction bearing traces of the long lapse of time, the cloudiness of the day increased the solemn shade of the edifice within, while at intervals a vivid sunbeam broke through the clouds, and lighted up the exquisite temple of art with the radiance of nature, all the white vestments gleamed like snow in contrast to the dark stone around, and on ancient pillar and arch the colours of the rainbow were thrown by the sunbeam as it streamed through the painted windows above. Jane felt how around that small circle of worshipping life the mighty dead lay, sleeping the long sleep of ages,—the sleep from which there can be no awaking until all burst their tombs and arise, when the peal of the archangel's trumpet rolls along the vast aisles to summon the dead, and the Abbey walls crumble and fall, and the heavens lie open to the first glance of those who rise. But now they all lay silent around—princes, potentates, and powers of

the earth; the mighty in kingly rule or in intellect, the greatly beloved, the early wronged, all sleeping side by side,—no voice, nor any to answer, until the last moment of time stays its course above their tombs, and the all-vivifying life of eternity flows in.

It was the 30th day of May, and the choristers chanted —"O put not your trust in princes, nor in any child of man, for there is no help in them." Nowhere could the whole of the psalms for that morning have been listened to with greater effect; the contrast so vividly drawn in them between the creature and the Creator—as the refuge and hope of the soul! Man in his nothingness—God in His almightiness; man in his momentary duration in time—God in His unchanging eternity; man in his absolute want—God in all-sufficiency and riches of compassion and grace. Truth was re-written on the soul in its freshness, and the impression of human vanity left mournfully solemn. Then followed the lesson for the day—the first chapter of Genesis—where could it have been heard more effectively than there? in the midst of one of the stateliest edifices graven by art and man's device, reared with consummate skill, and the mental and manual labour of ages, there to hear of Him who formed the earth out of nothing, who spake the word and it was done, who commanded, and it stood fast? The second lesson for the day, Matt. iii., was not less impressive—all combined to stamp nothingness on man,—"I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham;" then the Divine Will choosing out the one Divine Man, and

declaring of Him and Him alone, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And the moment that the Church had named her REDEEMER, she rose in fellowship with Him!—the solitary Reader had no sooner breathed the words—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," than the choral hymn of joyful adoration pealed from pillar to pillar—"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people!" But it did not end there; it took man by the hand, man—whom all that went before had laid low in the dust—it called him out to stand before Heaven and Earth, not in any character of earthly dignity or greatness, but in the one indispensable disposition of those "called of God"—"THOU, CHILD, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways."

Soon after Trinity Sunday Mrs. Barrington left London to spend some weeks on a distant estate, and then to return to the Grange, with the hope of welcoming Jane and her parents in the autumn.

In June, Jane was to leave London with her parents to visit her mother's sister, whose home was a village Rectory. Jane was sorry to go. It was not the splendour, nor the wonders, nor the interest of London itself, that she sighed for; it was because her grandsire would want her, and those children of misery would miss her from among them. But Earth's children of blessing leave brightness behind them. Jane's London cousins were not all alike selfish; some among them had become so from training and natural thought-

lessness, but now that an unselfish heart had lived among them, they saw what it was in itself, and what it was in its work, and they would try to be like it: the aged grandfather would never be left neglected and unthought of as before. Happy the spirit whose bright example can influence, and happy the spirit that can yield to it!

But those children of misery—Jane could only leave them to Heaven! No one around her could fill her place with them, no one was willing to venture to make the attempt; but Heaven can bring its sons from far, its daughters from the ends of the earth. Already in the distance another was coming: she was coming from the gardens and glades of her home, a mansion where trophies from the Spanish Armada hung their dark drapery round the dim distances of the dining-hall, whose centre was a galaxy of brilliant light and life; she was coming to tread alone the haunts of misery and crime, in years hardly older than Jane, and though not in nature fearless like her, yet equally intrepid when the miseries of humanity called for her aid. She was coming to labour there for years, in the power of love, in the patience of hope, in the might of gentleness. To awaken, and retain to the end of her mission, the softened, kindly glances of faces that to a stranger would have seemed incapable of one gentle expression. To gather the destitute children, and, aided by others, to clothe and feed and teach them; to follow them when absent, and win them back again; to prove to the world that there is no breastplate so sheltering as faith, no weapon so resistless as love. And many more, beside her,

were already looking up to Heaven, who soon would look down again in blessing upon Earth—reflecting the light they had caught from above, breathing the life they had received from the skies.

CHAPTER XXI.

In his work of blessing, Edward Seymour had his discouragements, and his times of deep depression—incident to every mind working for the highest ends, and sensitive to every influence that is capable of acting on the spirit. He was wise enough at these times to seek friendly companionship, not because he realised beforehand its power to relieve, but because he knew that the necessity of the moment demanded a turning away from the temporary gloom of his own spirit, to the clearer light in which others might be living and acting. This effort made, he seldom failed to find his spirit strengthened to sustain its burden, and the aspect of all things less gloomy when he turned to them again. But there were times when even this power was wanting; when the utmost he could do was to look to some friendly heart to bear the burden with him. It was in this oppressed state of feeling that, on one of the early summer days of which we have already spoken, he walked to the Hall, but not finding the family at home, he was returning spiritless to his lonely dwelling, when he met the Captain on horseback. Captain North immediately observed the pastor's look of depression; his anxiety to know the cause, and to relieve or share the

feeling, was as instantly called forth; he dismounted from his horse, and putting his arm into that of Edward Seymour's, asked with interest, 'How have you been wearying yourself to-day? What new cares?'

'O, as to work,' replied the pastor, 'I have nothing to show! I wandered down now to solace myself with an hour in your home, but I was disappointed, for the house was deserted.'

'Well, here am I,' said the Captain, 'to make the best family representative I can; and now the best thing for you will be to mount my horse, and take a gallop over the hills; by that time you will find me at home.'

When Captain North started that morning, it had been with the intention of riding some distance to transact a matter of business; but he was one among the few who can feel how pressing is the claim of an overburdened heart! Many there are who, themselves knowing little of the weight of depression, turn away hastily, with want of power to comprehend its effect upon others. And too many there are who would banish from sight and thought the aspect that tells of a burdened spirit, and court the presence of that which offers a passing entertainment. Having no fountain of light within, they have none to shed on the darkened, but are compelled to kindle their sparks of mirth from external incentives.

Captain North had instantly weighed and decided the relative importance of the rival claims before him. And there are many who, doubtless, would act unselfishly if they had ever acquired the habit of considering the feelings and wants

of others; but, pre-occupied exclusively with their own plans and purposes, they witness the want or suffering of spirit, which God has permitted to pass before them, and not duly estimating it, pass on, with an expression of regret; hastening to some claim, perhaps, that would not have suffered by delay, leaving the oppressed spirit to sink lower beneath its wearying weight alone. Will they not one day discover how often they have lost the blessing of obeying the divine precept, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ!" Many can make kind arrangements when they fall in with their own plans; but few, comparatively, can make their plans fall in with the constant thought for others: this, we know, can be only habitually attained by those in whose hearts the law of sympathy is kept uppermost.

The steed bounded lightly over the summer hills; the air, heavy to the walker below, blew fresh on the high ground above. The evident sympathy manifested in the manner and deed of his friend, together with the breeze of the hills, aided in relieving an overwrought mind, and Edward Seymour entered his friend's study with a fresher aspect: but still the burden was upon him, though less oppressive than before; he could not that day leave it on the hills, or commit it to the wings of the wind; it would yield itself to nothing less than the heart of "a Friend"—who "loveth at all times."

'O North, I feel as if my whole parish would be hung around my neck like a millstone, and sink me some day in unfathomable depths!'

'Well,' replied the Captain, 'there once was a man who went mad because he gave himself up, without change of subject, exclusively to the study of insects! If you lose your rational faculties, you will at least have more reason to show for it, seeing your one subject in life is immortal and eternal!'

'But what can I do? Must I not at least aim to tread in the steps of the Apostles, who laboured "in season and out of season," and exhorted their followers to the same?'

'Yes; but you must not overlook the fact, that He who knoweth whereof we are made, and graciously gives us endless variety to relieve and balance the ceaseless demand on our faculties, withheld it not from the first ministers of His Kingdom. Think of their constant travels; no missionary wanderings can equal them; their natural powers were incessantly refreshed by new scenes continually opening before them—from the Athenian Acropolis, to the desert island of Malta—we are so constituted, that to many of our faculties change affords rest. Think, again, of how they went from one nation to another, the constant variety of individuals, of customs, of character, and even of religions, presented before them; the fact of continually changing the language they spoke in was of itself an essential variety. See St. Paul labouring day after day as a tent-maker, his hands ministered to his necessities and to those that were with him; that he "might not be burdensome to any," was his own motive, but who can say that it was not permitted by God, who works by means, as a temporary change and repose to His Apostle! You, on the contrary, are fixed in one limited dis-

trict, where the same scenes, people, and facts lie continually before you; if you are continually labouring in the same line of thought and effort, you will strain your own mind, and probably overdo your work, not leaving it enough to "spring and grow thou knowest not how!" If you watch each plant too intently, you will not see them grow, you will only overstrain and cloud your own vision. Milton's Archangel would say to you, as he did to Adam,—

> '"But I perceive thy sight to fail. Objects divine
> Must needs impair and weary human sense."'

'But what can I do?'

'You must have wisdom to use the infinite variety of material which Wisdom Divine has provided for you, by turning your mind to different subjects of thought. Instead of straining on at things above your wearied powers, you must let them rest awhile on things below them. Let your tired spirit float reposingly down the tide of song: you have the poets of your own and other lands; ascend the stream of Milton's majestic flow of thought and diction; or take down a historian, not one of to-day, professing to give you concentrated essences from all sides, but one whose every feeling is launched in his own cause. You will find a human companionship there, and, whether you agree or differ, the good effect on you will be the same. Be assured your mind concentrates itself too entirely on its subject, and is not tough enough in its texture to bear long tension on any one point. You must give it variety, or you will most certainly weaken its power.'

'We are in a terrible scrape now,' said the Captain, coming in hurriedly to the luncheon-table. 'I have ordered them to bring my horse round; just give me something first, for I am famishing.'

'But what's the scrape, Harry?'

'Oh! that creature of no opportunity! I hope—I am sure—he is the last of the race.'

'Mr. Beltimore? what has he been doing?'

'Well, I cannot stay to tell you fairly now, and he is but a link in the chain; only he is always the rotten link, and lets the whole down! But it seems that as Howis was driving off to the coach last week, he saw poor Ottaway, or rather saw a man, in the distance, drawing something from the hedge, and then out springs Mr. Beltimore's gamekeeper from the wood and seizes him. Howis drove up as fast as he could, and found it was Ottaway—the man, you remember, who wanted to leave Mr. Beltimore's estate and work on ours, only my father thought it would give offence. The bird, it seems, was somehow caught for a moment in the ditch, and the poor fellow was tempted and took it. The fact was melancholy, that he had been out of work for weeks, his wife ill at home, and he was then returning after a second fruitless journey of three miles to the relieving officer for an order for meat, the relieving officer not being at home either time, returning with nothing to give his poor wife, when he saw the bird struggling before him. Of course the law is the law, and we know he ought not to have taken it, and the gamekeeper had him safe. But Howis risks missing the

coach and drives off to Mr. Beltimore, tells him the circumstances, and pleads for the poor man. Mr. Beltimore promises to see to it; but of course does not carry out that purpose. Howis returns the day after the assizes, and finds the poor fellow in prison. Howis then goes off to Mr. Beltimore, who said he had talked with his gamekeeper, and found it was a daring act; and a little of the prison would be a lesson for the future.

'"I beg your pardon, sir," says Howis; "you may have talked with the gamekeeper, but you have not talked with the poor man, or you would not give that opinion; he has a character as good as any man all the country round. I would have denied myself anything sooner than that man should have seen the inside of a prison; it was a sudden temptation, sir, that perhaps neither you nor I should have stood! Pray, sir, how has his poor wife been fed? They say she is in a decline, and will scarce live to see him out again!"

'Beltimore replied, "If a man chose to incur the penalty of a prison, he must take the risks as to what became of his wife."

'This history Howis goes through to me until I get as indignant as he is. All this misery comes from not knowing his people! Had Beltimore just given himself the trouble, and taken interest enough to know one man from another, he never could have turned the prison key on that poor fellow! I am going off to see him.'

The Captain entered the cell, and poor Ottaway hid his face in his hands, and burst into tears.

'O sir, I am not worthy of this charity in you! but indeed, sir, it comes of living where there's no one to care what a poor man is, or what a poor man has! If ever there has been an honest striver to keep house and home together, it was me, sir! But I do say, sir, our Squire has never so much as crossed our door-step, nor spoke a word to one any way, to know how the world went with one; taken on and put off from work just as you would yoke or unyoke a horse according to the labour in hand, with no thought how one was to pick up a morsel in between! I ask your pardon, sir, but now 'tis all over with me, it are a comfort to pour out my complaints. O dear, how hard I fought to get a turn of the General's service, since that new parson came up there! Why, they say he seems to know their troubles afore even they tell 'em, and points them a way out of them, or to bear up under them; but there's my poor wife, not a creature has looked at her but me and a neighbour all the time of her long illness! Dear me, sir, sure they'll taste of it some day that walks in riches, and in knowledge, and lets we perish worse than the beasts—for they do feed them in the pastures when they don't work 'em on the land! But there's a God above hears the groans that their thick walls shut out from troubling of them.'

'Yes, Ottaway; but I am afraid you forgot in your trouble that there's a God above who hears prayer! Did you kneel down that morning and ask of Him, "Give us this day our daily bread?"'

'No, sir, I did not!'

'Did you kneel down any day by the side of your poor wife and pray for your daily bread?'

'No, sir, I did not; I cannot say I did! for never till now that you put the word to me did any ever charge it home so before!'

'But you know the prayer our Saviour taught us?'

'O yes, sir, my mother teached it me! it is all I do know, for I cannot read.'

'But that would have been enough to have kept you, Ottaway, if you had daily prayed it with your heart to God. You know it says, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil!" If you had only prayed that prayer, the bird might not have come in your way, or if it had you would have been delivered from the evil of taking it! You see we find fault with others, but after all the first evil lies at our own door, in restraining prayer before God. "We have not because we ask not."'

'I see it, sir! I see it! But is it too late now, sir?'

'No, Ottaway, no! God will hear your prayers, and count your tears, in this prison, if they be tears of heart-sorrow for never having prayed to Him before.'

'O sir, could you please to tell my poor wife so? she is dying, sir, and there's never been so much as a word of the like said to her all the time she has laid bad.'

'I will tell her all I have told you. One reason I had in coming, was to tell you we would take care of her; and I hoped also to bring you to feel your own sin, that God might have mercy on you.'

'Did you, sir? God bless you! for sure He sent you! I don't feel so bad at heart now as I did; I thought my poor wife would die, and I would be off for an emigrant as soon as I was free, and never see my country more, for I felt as it had been so hard to me! but now I think she may hold on. If it please you, sir, cheer her up a bit as you have done me, and put that to her about "our Father!" She has known of that, only I am pretty sure she has let it slip as I did!'

Miss Keymer had entered on her work in a new school-room, but that work had reached a higher level; she did not know it when her work began, but it was not the less true, because in her anxious onward glance she marked not her own progress. Diligently and painfully she taught her young pupil of "the things that are seen and are temporal." Of the things that are "unseen and eternal" she at first said nothing, and never much, but her eyes were raised to them, her spirit pressing after them, and this gave a higher tone to all her teaching of common things; her young pupil felt that her teacher's spirit rested not on things around her; sometimes she wondered where it did rest—wondered not in a questioning defined, but with the instinctive feeling awakened by observation. Had Miss Keymer been asked, she would perhaps have said it rested nowhere; it could not "rest on any tree here," for she had felt that "God had sold the forest unto death," and it had not yet learned to mount up and make its nest in the clefts of the rock. But though Miss Keymer did not realise it, yet her spirit had a rest beyond any it had known before; for to those whose flight is upward, though

toiling on wearied wings, yet the very air by which they are upborne, and without which they could not ascend, is the breathing of the Spirit, and there is rest in that atmosphere. It is not felt, because the soul is toiling upward to find *repose* in Jesus, and until it finds that repose nothing seems rest; but were it possible to send it back again to earth alone, it would quickly feel that there was more real rest of heart in seeking Heaven than in possessing Earth. And therefore, though Miss Keymer did not realise this, her pupil felt an influence higher than an earthly acquirement can command; and when at length a trembling word, or a half-told feeling of eternal things, fell from the teacher's lips, her pupil caught the clue. And in Miss Keymer's true and gentle character there was no contrary current to beat a young heart back, no confluent tide, as in some Christians, permanently setting towards an alien shore; all was simple, true, and kind: the heart of childhood could understand her, and so learned the more readily to understand her faith; and the lessons, difficult to Miss Keymer, were caught almost ere they fell from her, by the young heart she trained. It would not, we know, be always so, but no doubt it would far more often if teachers had Miss Keymer's genuine character; and so her pupil followed where she herself was pressing on, and she found herself not alone in earthly companionship—the young heart she trained for time had linked itself to hers for eternity.

Miss Keymer wrote to Antonia of her young pupil with ever-increasing interest; but as the years passed on she again felt the shadow of yet another approaching separation. Her

thoughts turned back to the beech-woods, and she longed, she said, 'that like the little birds, she could build a nest there, and make there her last earthly rest. It was that place that ever clung about her heart like home; and sometimes in the evening hours she wept to hear again the voices that were once around her there.' She was growing old, she said, 'too old to form new ties of strong association, and she felt weary sometimes of always teaching, and longed for more quiet times; but it was her work, and she must try and patiently fulfil her daily task, until that work was done. God had been gracious to her beyond her thoughts or prayers, and she could not doubt but that He still would be. She must soon wander forth again alone,' she said, 'she knew not where, but it would be enough for her that it was under HEAVEN!'

CHAPTER XXII.

In giving some passing glimpses of pastoral work, we make choice of the burden rather than the brightness, because joy is itself sufficient to lead the spirit lightly on, but trial and disappointment ask the ministering aid of others; they compel the darkened heart to say to its neighbour, "Give me of your oil, for my lamp is gone out;" and, until the last hour when the Bridegroom cometh, it is the will of our Father in Heaven that we should be ever "ready to give, glad to distribute" of all that can be imparted by each to the other; "as each man hath received the gift, so let him minister the same, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

On one occasion Edward Seymour was engaged to dine with the General and his family, and he went under the burden of disappointment. The morning had brought to light an act of delinquency in one of the most promising boys of his school, a child on whom his bright expectations had been fixed. He found that he was not to spend the evening in the social family circle, for other guests were assembled when he entered.

At dinner he found himself seated by Miss North. It was in vain that he tried to rally from the depression of dis-

appointment sufficiently to meet the demand made upon him, so, following his usual course, he openly confessed that he was thoroughly discouraged and oppressed by a sad disappointment which he had met with that day. Miss North at once wished to know the nature of the disappointment, and barely listening to the end of the very brief narrative, she began to enumerate a list of similar, and even worse cases, in her own experience. It was certainly a melancholy satisfaction to offer, but Miss North acted in obedience to the law of suggestion. When any catastrophes were communicated to her, she could seldom do more than partially hear and most imperfectly weigh them, because so many corresponding facts were recalled to her mind under this law of suggestion, that the sufferer, now a listener, too often had cause to regret the venture that had drawn forth additional fuel for the smouldering embers of depression. Miss North being professedly a matter-of-fact person, no other line of response could be expected from her; but it was not the less true, that one echo of sympathetic feeling—a single application of a strengthening principle—or the least brightening of hope, would have been worth incalculably more than the whole array of parallel instances. Edward Seymour looked around with hopeless eyes—there was no release until the ladies withdrew, then the emancipated listener breathed more freely, and felt a sudden sense of relief.

Miss North was quite prepared to follow up the conversation with additional facts on the same subject, but the pastor of the Alps kept too distant for any renewal of the conference.

He found that evening, as he had often found on previous occasions, one spirit at leisure, from its own practical experiences, to meet the present feeling of another; he breathed the burden of his disappointment to Antonia. This boy—this child of promise—had proved dishonest and untrue. His efforts were lost—his hopes were gone—that boy proving false, he had no idea which one among all his children he might trust; such disappointments made all things around seem to wither!

Unlike Miss North, Antonia ever listened with courtesy and interest to the whole conversation of the one addressing her: she did not come under the wise man's censure,—"He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and a shame unto him;" this might be one reason why her answers were generally satisfactory and welcome; but the chief reason, no doubt, was that her heart was always open both to Heaven and to Earth; another's trouble or difficulty found easy access, and the balm of comfort, the joy of hope, or the light to aid the difficulty, an open entrance from above. Speaking with a simplicity that gave reply the character chiefly of suggestion—sometimes making the listener turn, as though surprised, by a whisper from Heaven.

'Are our efforts lost,' asked Antonia, 'because they fail in earthly success? Have they not a still higher aim which cannot be disappointed?'

'Yes; one is too apt to lose sight of all that lies above the clouds of disappointment. To glorify God by our efforts is our highest aim, and that cannot fail! But the boy—I am heart-broken for him.'

'O, do not give him up! Do you not think that deeper darkness before light is the way by which we are often led?'

'Yes; but he was already a child of such promise!'

'May not that promise be the very reason why the greater assault has been made against him, and may he not walk more humbly with God all his lifetime for having fallen in his youth?'

'Yes, it may be so; but my hope seems to have withered, and failing in that child, I know not on which it can rest.'

'O, then, let it not rest on any child, but on God only! The prophet Samuel said of Jesse's elder son, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him;" it was not so; the prophet had to pass over many, but David was in the field—and he stood before Samuel at last, "the man after God's own heart!" May we not wait in trust for God's choice?'

'Yes; there is cheering in that. God is a Sovereign; and our choice must wait upon His, and no doubt it often needs the discipline of disappointment to bring us to this, but in His sovereignty there is rest! I thank you for enlightening my darkness with that thought, and we need not forget that when God's thoughts are not our thoughts, or His ways not our ways, it is because they are "*higher!*" and therefore we may well be content with His will in all things!'

The Captain one day overtaking old Michael, Mrs. Barrington's servant, joined him, and in the course of conversation, inquired whether he understood the new rector's preaching?

'Well, sir, I say there seems no coming to an end of one's

understanding, sitting under such preachings as his be; it's always a drawing out something new: and to see the light he puts into things—why, a babe may almost lay hold on them. I am sure to sit and hear how he preached up that heavenly armour last Sunday—how he showed up the difference to be thought of between this world's armour and that armour of light, and then brought it down to each one—where's your sword? where's your shield? did you use them when the foe was upon you? and then showed how we lost the day for the want of them! I don't know who could get an understanding under it, if an old soldier like me, that's fought so long for the crown, had no feeling to see how I have scarce ever stood my ground for the King that's above! But, then, to be sure, how he preaches down the forgiveness of sins, as if he had it right from the good heart of the God above, till I was ready to fall down on my knees at the hearing of it. I consider when my mistress made him the parson, that was the best act she ever did of all her goodness for me; and so I have told her; and I pray God it may be the like for all others who hear him, for certainly I do say they can't hear a better, let them go where they will!'

'Did you never hear such plain preaching before, Michael?'

'Yes, sir, when I was a lad, before I listed for the wars; there was a minister used to preach in our church down in Devon, just in that same way as our pastor does here. It brings him back to me wonderfully. I am sure I would have walked miles and miles if I could but have heard him; times and often, when I have been at the wars—but the only ser-

mon then was the groans and laments of the dying! But I was spared, and it seems to me as if the very prayer of my heart had been granted me, for certainly our parson and him I thought on so in the wars, are as like one to another as two heavenly things can well be!'

The early autumn found Laura at the sea with her parents and her young friend Leonore; the same little fishing-town that Leonore had visited before. How eagerly did Leonore conduct Laura to the well-remembered cabin on the shore. There it stood as before, but all around it wore another aspect—a look of desolation was over it all! Leonore's heart beat quicker, and Laura felt more than she cared to express as they drew near and at length reached the door; it stood a little way open, and Leonore gently pushed it further and went in; Laura followed, half holding back, as if in fear to venture unbidden. There was Bet Briggen; but oh, how changed! old, feeble, and wasted, as she looked now, Leonore would hardly have known her elsewhere than in her cabin. She was lying outside a most wretched bed, and looked up surprised on the entrance of the visitors.

'O Betty, dear Betty, I am your own young lady! Don't you remember me, Betty?'

'O, thousands of blessings upon her young head! Remember her? Yes, I knows the sound of her tongue! but who could have thought such a poor prayer as mine would be answered, and my own darling young lady come stepping right in! Blessings on her, and what a colour, to be sure! What, was you after the salt sea, and poor Betty's dipping again?'

'No, Betty, I am strong and well now; my dear friend here brought me all the way only to see you!'

'What, did her! Well, I am sure if my poor Bill had not minded me how fast a prayer scuds up to them skies, I should have misdoubted the sight of my eyes, for 'twas but since the turn o' the tide that I begged hard you might bide on this shore once again before Bet Briggen could list for your steps on the shingle no more! Is his Honour and Madam come, too?'

'No, Betty; my kind friends have brought me with them, just on purpose that I might see you.'

'Well, only think of that! It dumbfounders me quite to be thought on like that by the goodness of Heaven, and gentlefolks too! It makes one seem up above afore one gets there. And there's my poor old man's Bible, and not a soul to speak up a word on it to me, only when I turns up his places I get a draught of the words, and they seem meat and drink,—that they do.'

'O Betty, we will come and see you, and read to you every day while we are here.'

'Ah, so you will, just as you used to, ringing the shingle under your young, pattering feet. I couldn't give you a dash of the salt sea now if it were ever so; but I take it you never lost the fine colour I brought to your young white cheeks what time you bided on this shore afore.'

'But, Betty, why did you not write and tell us you were ill? I mean, why did you not get a friend to write? You must have wanted a great many things.'

'No, dear, 'tis not for want I was craving for you, but only to light up my old eyes, and hear the sound of your tongue once again, and then I can lie down and die.'

'But how long have you been ill, Betty?'

'Well, dear, 'twill be a year afore Christmas comes round. I got a bad leg and then wasted away. I shall never do a hand's-turn again for myself; but one and another chance times will look in, and they bring me a bit and a scrap, and fill my can with fresh water, and I wants for nothing.'

To Leonore and Laura poor Betty Briggen seemed to want everything, but they could not prevail upon her to consent to any changes. 'The old place did right well as it was; it had served her poor Bill to the last, and she would never crave for a better till she went where he was. A warm rag of a blanket would be a dear comfort for nights when the wind blew up strong, but she craved nothing more—only to see her poor old man's Bible laid again on them young hands as first brought it in, and hear her tongue as it spoke up the words.'

So, day after day Laura and Leonore went to the cabin, and Leonore read. Once or twice they chose out a passage that they thought might be one of fresh comfort to the widow, but Betty Briggen listened uneasily, and would presently say,—

'I don't know as I have ever heard it afore.'

'No, Betty, but I am sure you will like it.'

'Ah, dear, 'tis all good; but there's none like to them words my poor Bill and I minded over so long. I rides

easiest on them; I don't know the turns of them new ones.'

So it was still the same sweet words repeated over and over again to the ear and the heart of the widow. She had not so much power of expression as poor Bill, but she clung where he clung, and ate the same spiritual bread, and drank the same spiritual drink. While to Laura and Leonore the ocean itself was lost in comparison with the interest of the satisfied heart of that poor dying woman.

They could not be happy to leave her untended except by the casual kindness of neighbours. Betty, however, liked her solitude best; her young visitors inquired anxiously in the town for any one who was good to the poor, but no one could be heard of. One day as they were walking along the shore, sad in the thought of leaving Betty Briggen alone, Laura said,—

'I declare I will ask those fishermen; they may know of some one, though the tradespeople do not.'

'Do you know any one in these parts who is willing to speak a kind word to the sick and the poor?'

'I don't know as any one on us be's against that.'

'No, I am sure you would do as much as that, and more, too; but do you know any rich person—any lady or gentleman?'

'I don't know any gentlefolks anywhere hereabouts.' Then a comrade looked round, 'If you wants a minister, there's a good one a long two mile the other side of the creek: he belongs out there, but he comes a chance time out

here, and sits discoursing with we; he is right pleasant to hear. I am told he preaches on Sundays at the church out there; one of those days I mean to go and see, for he's a right sort of one to go after; it's not long he has come, as I hear.'

Laura and Leonore followed up the faint clue in a drive with Laura's father. They found the minister, a curate lately come to the next fishing village on the coast; he was readily interested, and promised to find out the poor woman and visit her, when able to accomplish it. Leonore and Laura thankfully left a purse in his charge to supply all her wants, but her wants were not many; the granting of the heart's latest wish is often a sign that all unsatisfied longings are drawing to an end. Betty Briggen, with a few quiet tears, parted from the young friends who had made her their daily interest, and then, as she said, felt ready to lie down and die. A few weeks and Betty Briggen was no more on earth, but the blessing imparted and received links inseparably those that death temporally sunders.

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was the end of June when Jane left London with her parents for the distant village Rectory, which was the home of her aunt. It was a day's posting, and the calm of the summer evening reigned over all when Jane's mother hailed the first glimpse of the village in the distance. A few more windings of the lane, festooned with the wild honeysuckle, a few more avenues of branching elm and oak, and here and there a scattered cottage, from which the children ran to the little garden gate to look at the carriage rolling swiftly by, and then the grey church-tower—half-gilded by the sunbeams which lay aslant upon the graves and grassy sod, in that hush which has a feeling more than earthly in the bright calm of the village summer evening. A few moments, and Nature, in her stillness, gave place to all the gladness of expressive joy. One turn through a gate, and the Rectory trees, the Rectory lawn, the Rectory porch, were all before them, and the glad welcoming group. There stood the father, in his fresh-heartedness of aspect; there the mother, in her maternity of tenderest authority; there the daughters of the home—Marian in her earliest womanhood, with a mingling light and shadow, as if her spirit had already

trod the path of some deep sorrow; Matilda, thoughtful in her gladness; May, all rosy, laughing glee, in this her fourteenth summer; and Isabelle, who had her mother's eyes,—all these were there, and as the carriage stopped, a boy—a tall and pleasant boy, who smiled the welcome which he did not speak—threw down the carriage-steps, and those long parted now mingled into one bright band again: yet was the gladness chastened in its joy, for from the welcoming circle one dear form was gone,—one voice among its tones was silent,—one clasping hand not there. But in memory the lost one stands in view, and every eye looks on the absent, and every heart remembers only more, because that presence is now among the earthly living.

The tired travellers were taken to their rooms, and Marian attended Jane. Jane had come from the costly splendour of her grandsire's dwelling, but when she entered her little chamber, she exclaimed, 'O lovely room! will this be mine?'

And yet, why was it that it struck her eye with instant power to charm? We cannot tell, unless it be that true simplicity has a more enduring attraction than all the adventitious ornament of art. The chamber that pleased so well was partly covered by a square of stone-coloured drugget, with a bright blue diamond check, and round the carpet the deal boards of the floor showed their clean surface. The room was papered with a blue diamond check upon a white ground; a little bed with snowy drapery of white dimity, the curtains looped with blue cord, and the short white dimity window-

curtains that drew across the wide, low casement, were fastened back with loops of blue; the furniture, all of deal, was painted stone-colour, with lines of blue; the casement was open, and the evening fragrance of the flowers floated in. A lime-tree shaded the casement from the western sun, whose parting beams were gleaming through its foliage, and lighting up a fair engraving that hung in a frame of oak above the mantel-piece,—it was the German Overbeck's exquisite picture of the Holy Child at his supposed father's trade, with his virgin mother looking on as his hands held and used the carpenter's tools. The blackbird perched upon the lime-tree was carolling his evening song, loud and clear as if he knew a child of melody were meeting her first welcome there. By the open casement stood a large, old-fashioned, easy chair, with its cover of white dimity, and near it a little oval table, with a large glass ink-bottle, some flowers, and a little rather roughly-carven tray of oak, with pens, &c. This was the room; and Jane gladly threw herself into the easy chair beside the open casement, and as she did so, said again, 'O lovely room! how happy I shall be!'

Marian waited on her cousin skilfully and tenderly, as if she knew how to make her presence and her aid acceptable to a tired stranger, for in her cousin's home Jane was as yet a stranger. Then leaving her a little while to rest, she promised to call her when Jane's mother might be ready for the evening repast; and Jane was left alone with the rich fragrance of the flowers, and the blackbird's mellow song, and the rustling of the boughs in the summer evening breeze, and the

walls before her—and the sacred picture dappled in the sunset with the shadow of the leaves.

When Jane's mother went down with her sister, Marian returned for Jane, as she had promised. The social board was most hospitably spread, and Charley had brought in his fresh fruit from the cellar, where it had been kept cool, and the circle of two families gathered round the Rectory table.

The arrival not having been until late, the first silvery star was looking down through the pale blue of the sky, when they left the tea-table, and drew around the drawing-room window which opened on the lawn.

'Let us go out,' said Jane, 'and breathe this delicious air as freely as we can.' And the sisters went with her.

The old trees on the lawn and around the house looked something unlike any other trees to Jane: they seemed to her as if they knew that they were home trees,—as if they grew with sheltering care, spreading out their branches, and bending in beneficent affection over the young forms that had grown up beneath them. Not a weed existed in the beds and borders,—healthy, happy-looking plants bloomed in contrast side by side, and the rose-trees drooped with the weight of their clustering blossoms. Charley ran away to his vegetables and fruit, to see whether any marauding slugs could be apprehended in the evening hour; and the younger sisters dropped off one by one to pour the cool evening waters on the thirsty flowers with hands of careful affection; and Jane and Marian were left alone.

'It is like stepping into a new world of delight,' said

Jane, as they sat alone in a trellis bower. 'These exquisite birds, I suppose, make a short summer's night.'

'Yes, indeed,' replied Marian; 'they seem too happy for long slumbering on the trees; if you do not sleep soundly I am afraid they will wake you at dawn, you will have a perfect orchestra around you, and I am afraid you will wish the performance a little longer delayed.'

'O no! let them welcome the day! I will have my orisons as early as theirs. But have you the nightingale here?'

'Yes, in numbers; but they are all gone now except one, — a faithful bird, who has built for years in that ash-tree near the house, he is always the last to leave us. You may, perhaps, hear him; but I fear every night his farewell may have been sung. I was sitting here alone last evening, and he came and perched on this side of the tree, where I saw him distinctly; he sang to me until the evening prayer-bell called me in.'

'He will sing again!' said Jane, with her bright faith, which trusted ever in all things that were faithful and free. 'I have never yet heard the nightingale's song; and I have a belief I shall listen to it first here, where all is enchantment to me.'

Marian turned to the bright speaker, and gave a look of such grateful feeling at that tribute to her home, that Jane wondered for a moment what had called forth the smile.

As they wandered back to the house they found that the younger ones had persuaded their mamma and aunt to leave the house, and sit out upon the rustic bench on the lawn; they, too, were enjoying the soft summer night, while the gentle-

men paced the gravel walk in the light of the moon. The prayer-bell assembled them within; and sweet was the choral psalm of praise from all that household band, whose full-toned harmony arose from hearts of love to Heaven.

Jane's constant recollection of the absent objects of her interest was one fact that accounted for her changeless hold on every heart that loved her. There is an instinct in the human soul that knows the hold of a faithful affection; not the sudden warmth of a summer attachment, which the changing seasons of life can chill into coldness; not the pleasant exchanges of mutual attentions, where all things are pleasantly balanced to favour the attractions of intercourse,—but the faithful heart of which you can be absolutely sure in all seasons, and under all circumstances,—the faithful heart who will give you truth when all smiles in sunshine, and tenderness when chastening lays you low, instead of the reverse—which seems too often found the more easy course to follow. Such a heart was Jane's; and as she sat alone in her mother's room that night, filled with the charm of the loving simplicity around her, she sat silent and thoughtful awhile, and then said, 'If we could but have left those children of misery happy, then life here would be perfect.'

'Dearest child,' said her mother, 'there must be ever a shadow haunting our path, to remind us that we are in a region of sin and of sorrow, and therefore only strangers and pilgrims ourselves; but it is blessed for us when we can make the sorrows of others our grief, before we are called to the weight of more personal distress.'

'O mamma, I think I could bear personal sorrow better than the thought of misery—so helpless and hopeless in others!'

'Not helpless, nor hopeless,' said her mother, 'if the sufferer's will did not refuse the love waiting to raise from the dust; but many of those we have left will arise, and put on their beautiful garments.'

'Oh! to see it!' exclaimed Jane.

'You have done what you could for them, my child; and you still can ask of God to do for them all that they want; therefore, take all the brightness of life around you now. We have need of all that God gives us,—the gladness no less than the grief; only meet all things at the feet of your Saviour, in closest association with Him, then your griefs will all lean where your joys have twined before, and He will be your centre and sustainer in all.'

Jane had not been long in her own room before the gentlest knock at her door aroused her attention. It was her cousin Marian, she had heard the first note of the nightingale, and thinking that Jane would be yet hardly sleeping, and that it might be the last night of the heavenly melody, she came gently to see, and if waking, to tell her that her prophetic hope was fulfilled,—the bird had not flown. Jane was sitting at her open casement, her candle was out, and the moon shone in full through the uncurtained window; her long golden tresses, loosed from their bonds, flowed back on her shoulders, and any eye which had gazed on the picture of her childhood might from that alone have recognised her then.

As Marian entered the room the bird of night again poured forth his lay; and before Marian could speak, Jane exclaimed, 'O! I hear it! that song I have never heard before!'

Jane rested in her large white arm-chair, and Marian sat on the ground at her feet, and there alone they listened in silence, in the light of the moon, to the bird, as he poured forth his lay beneath the soft wings of the gently brooding night, poured that song forth in joy, as if in thrilling earnest of the day that shall dawn on "the new heavens and the new earth," where "there shall be no more night," when the light shall be too pure to need darkness to purge it, too deep to need shadows to tone it, when slumber shall not be wanted—because strength shall be celestial; when rest shall be for ever inseparable from action, and repose interwoven with expression, and all harmony live on unbroken. They listened together, and their spirits ascended on the breath of that melody, until Earth and Heaven for them were blended into one, and the shadows of sin and of sorrow were lost sight of in the Light and the Love that shall dispel them for ever.

The early birds did not wake the young sleeper, tired with her journey. She slept on, and though they did their best to arouse her, she heard not their call; but her mother's gentlest step awoke her at seven, and, refreshed by her slumber, she arose. The birds were then almost silent, but it was the land of songs Jane had entered. She had not been up long when the sound of sweet voices rose from the garden, and she saw from the window her young cousins at work among the flowers; and, as they worked, from time to time, they sang. Jane listened, and she caught the words as bright, rosy May

sang them out in broad and happy earnest beneath Jane's casement, while she tied up the carnations which were opening in the morning sun.

"Children of the heavenly King,
As ye journey sweetly sing;
Sing your Saviour's worthy praise,
Glorious in His works and ways.

"Ye are travelling home to God,
In the way the fathers trod;
They are happy now, and ye
Soon their happiness shall see."

'What a heavenly place it is!' said the faithful maid, who attended upon Jane. 'To have been about the world as I have with my lady, and yet I never saw the place like this! I am sure one might spend a life away here, and feel always at the gate of Heaven.'

'We will not cheat ourselves, Gunter, whatever we do; seeing it is not the *place*, but the *spirit*, in which we live that will keep us at Heaven's gate—remember that, and you may be always there!'

'Yes, I know it is so; but I am a terrible one for sticking in the *place;* if the place be all right, I am; and if the place be amiss, so am I while I am in it—what light I have seems to get smothered up in the darkness.'

'I suppose,' said Jane, 'if the truth could be known, you are in danger of shining only by reflection from without? If you have light from Heaven within you, the darkness around will not be able to put it out!'

But the bell called the household together, and the song

of thanksgiving ascended to Heaven, not from the household alone, but from some of the aged villagers who came up from their cottages 'to catch the dew-fall,' as they called it, along with the family.

'Shall you peep at me?' May asked of Jane, 'you will find me so busy after breakfast.'

'Where shall I peep?' inquired Jane.

'O, just turn the corner, at the foot of the staircase, and then you will come to a door up three steps, and I shall be there.'

'Mamma, I am sure that first white lily will open this morning!' exclaimed Matilda at breakfast; 'I think it will open in the sun about twelve, when I cannot watch, because I must be busy; will you just walk down and look at it? Only think what it will be to see it unfold those lovely white leaves! I could sit by it all day to watch for their opening!'

Jane soon went in search of her bright little cousin as requested; and found her in a large storeroom, with closets round it, a wide dresser above the closets, and shelves over the dresser. May was standing at the dresser, with two wooden bowls of water before her, a tray on which wet cups and plates were draining, and a tea-cloth in her hand. At Jane's light step she turned her head.

'O, I am so glad you are come! I have fetched in a chair all ready; do just sit down, and I can tell you everything.'

'The veriest little washerwoman,' said Jane, 'with her two pails before her!'

'Yes; one is warm water, and one cold to make the china

look clear. I wash it all every morning, because Kezia has so many rooms to attend to! she does it in the evening. I have to be as busy as a bee, and not lose a minute, because Matilda comes at ten o'clock, and all my work must be finished up first.'

'What is Matilda's profession?'

'O, Matilda makes all the puddings and the tarts, and cakes and biscuits; she is cook, and I am housemaid! Only I do it alone, but Charley always manages his lessons so as to come when Matilda comes, and he reads to her all the time; he is reading Milton through to her now—I will tell you how I found it out (for I am doing my lessons when Matilda is here), but sometimes at dinner Charley says to papa, "That dish is Penseroso, papa, and this is l'Allegro, both equally good I assure you, according to your taste!" Charley is so fond of Matilda! she suits him, because she is always listening when he reads; he says she makes puddings as if she were hemming a silk pocket-handkerchief—so quietly he means—but he says the clatter of my cups is insufferable, and he is sure that he never could put any poetry into them or into me! but you see I don't mind, because it would be rather a bore to have to listen to reading while I am seeing after the china, wouldn't it when you come to think?'

'Yes, certainly,' said Jane; 'if Charley resembles a reader I have been told of, who, though of course very humble, was heard to confess that he could read Milton so as to make the stones move! such a talent would be inconvenient with you and your china so near!'

O, I will tell Charley that! he delights in funny things. I always save them up for him. But shall I just show you Matilda's closets? she will not think of doing so, I know. Look, are they not wonderfully neat? every jar has its cover and its label. I shall be so glad when I am housekeeper and look to the stores! I shall be when I am fifteen, and then Isabelle will wash the cups and saucers. Mamma says she is afraid I shall grow up only a busy little housewife! Do you think there is any fear?'

'O take the hint, by all means,' said Jane, 'a hint is sometimes worth the world if you take it!'

'Then I will take the hint. What do you think I had better do? I read French, and I know a little German; I have no ear for music, but I can always play the hymn-tunes when I am wanted, and I keep all mamma's accounts, and I am very fond of history, and mamma says I do pretty well in geography. They laugh, and say I only want the housekeeper's keys to make me perfection! but you see it really is only because I am happy at everything—all things are so pleasant when one is able to do them! I am only so sorry for the poor helpless sick people! I always run down to them when I can; so what do you think I had better do? I should like to take mamma's hint.'

'Suppose, then, we keep the secret between us, for I can give a guess; I very much suspect that if you were only to do all these pleasant things, and not talk about what you do, that they would never call you little busy housekeeper again!'

'O dear, but it is so cheerful to talk!'

'Never mind, you have resolved on taking "a hint," keep the secret and try; look at me, and I will make you remember, without any one finding out, and you will then be quite safe from ever growing into a busy little housekeeper.'

'O dear! but I will try; I should not like to be *that*, I am sure I should not, because it has nothing of Heaven in its sound! I wish I was not so fond of talking! Do you think if I keep the secret you can cure me?'

'Yes, beyond a doubt I can, but it all depends on your keeping your good resolution to take a hint!'

'Dear me! I never knew before that a hint was of so much use. I will certainly take it, only it will be very hard at first. I shall look at you and remember. O dear, I think Matilda is coming, and I have not hung up my cups! O no, I am so glad, it is Marian!'

'You little thief! who would have thought of your stealing our cousin the first thing in the morning, and here is papa hunting for her to take her for a walk! Will you like to take a walk with papa?'

'Yes, of all things! I will be ready in an instant!' and giving the bright child a kiss, Jane left her with Marian to help her to hang up her tea-cups.

'Do you like Sunday?' asked Isabelle, the youngest in that house, of Jane, as she was walking alone with her in the garden on the last day of that first week.

'I *love* Sunday!' responded Jane; 'do not you?'

'Yes, I think it is the best of all days; these warm Sundays we each take our school class out-of-doors, and it is so pleasant!'

'I shall sit somewhere where I can see you all,' said Jane, 'as I am not to be allowed a place in any one's class!'

'Do you think you could just go and read to one of my best old people?' asked Isabelle, looking up inquiringly, 'she lies alone on her bed, and I always think of her so on the Sunday! and yet I cannot go because I have my class, and of an evening we are with mamma; mamma has a large Bible-class then, and papa one for the young men in the schoolroom. I should be so glad if you could go!'

'Yes, dear, I will do anything I can for you or your people.'

'O, how kind you are! I will run down after tea and tell her, it will make her Sunday happier. She says the words of the Bible are always coming into her heart, but, she says, sometimes she gets weary with want for the voice of the words. I am so fond of her! When I read to her once of Joseph she said that was what I am to her—the child of her old age! I did not take care of her until dear John died, she loved him so much! and then, when he was gone I tried to be her comfort, and now she says she has him in Heaven, and me on earth! Is not that beautiful?'

'Yes, beautiful indeed! Has she been ill long?'

'She is not ill, I think, it seems only weakness. She used to come with the old people every Sunday to dinner here, only now she cannot; so I have a little Can, and I just run down and carry her dinner.'

'Do the old people come to dinner on Sunday?'

'Yes. O, Sunday is such a happy day! It is only the

very old people—they lock up their cottages and come to church in the morning, and then they come to us, and we have a long table in the kitchen, and Matilda and May and I lay the cloth, and set all the basins directly after service, and then Sarah, our cook, has only to pour out the food into the two little tin pails. In winter it is soup with dumplings, and in summer it is Irish stew with vegetables; and Charley always sits at the bottom and asks the blessing, and Matilda and May and I take it by turns to be there with him, and sit at the top, and dine with them, and we are so happy! Then the old people come and sit by us, some with one and some with another, while we teach our children; they like to sit by us and listen; sometimes they fall asleep a little while —and that helps to rest them for the afternoon service, because they are so old! And sometimes I think perhaps they still hear our voices in their sleep, and dream of holy things. I always sit on summer Sundays just where I can see dear Johnnie's grave; Marian sits quite away from it, she says she is obliged to look above the grave to the blue sky to help her to get on; but I like to feel near his grave where he lies sleeping, it always seems to make me speak more gently, and more words of love.'

'I stood there this morning!' Jane said, 'before you came down to the garden; it was early, and the dew hung on the blossoms of the flowers you have planted around it, they looked so lovely there with the sun gleaming through the elm-trees! I thought I should have visited it alone, but the bee and the butterfly were both there before me,

beautiful emblems, I felt, as I watched them, of the same spirit on earth and in Heaven, both sipping the same honey-dew from the flowers, just as we shall drink of the same river of God's pleasures hereafter as here, only here we have the life of the labouring bee!'

'I wish you were going to stay with us always!' said Isabelle, as the only response she seemed able to make; 'I cannot bear to think you will go!'

'I never like going from places I love,' Jane replied, 'but most likely I shall lock you safely up in my heart, where I have one dear little cousin already—you remind me of her, I always keep her in my heart wherever I am, she can never get out any more!'

'Do lock me up with her, and never let me out any more!' said Isabelle.

'O, you may be sure if I once lock you up you will never get out! so it is a serious consideration both for you and for me. At least it would be if Heaven did not teach us so to love by its love to us;—those whom our Saviour once loves never get out of His heart any more! Do you remember what St. John says of that?'

CHAPTER XXIV.

There was a secret in the family life of this village Rectory. It may, alas! be called a secret, for that nursery, that schoolroom, that home is rare to which the important fact has been made a familiar truth of daily life. Each child of that village Rectory was taught from reason's earliest dawn its young responsibilities. The being a little older was constantly impressed as a reason for the tenderest care of those a little younger; the being a little stronger a reason for patience and forbearance; the possession of a little more knowledge a means of giving more power to lead others aright. The parents of that home repressed the natural selfishness and vanity of their own feeling for their children, training them as those who felt that they were laying the foundation of a character in each child whose growth and development was to continue through eternity. All selfishness and all display met an instant check, instead of being, as is often the case, strengthened by inconsiderate fondness one moment, and reproved the next. No infant tyranny, no unkind provoking, no ridicule or indifference to another's disgrace or pain, could live in the atmosphere of that home. Its sons were taught from childhood that their position was

not one of selfish exaction, but given by Him who when He deigned to make Himself our Brother, taught man from Heaven how to use his high prerogative of power. That home laid up in its children's hearts none of those bitter memories which darken many an early retrospect, and which so often would not have been if half the pains devoted to the imparting of mental acquirement, had been a little earlier and perseveringly used in teaching children their relative responsibilities.

Marian was the eldest, and her tenderness so like their mother's, that each younger heart, instead of passing the sister by, seemed rather to pass through her to their parents. Marian was the haven, always at hand, into which the little tempest-tossed vessel could run to repair its tackling, unfurl its sails, and put cheerily out to sea again. But the tenderness of older years was not seen in Marian alone; it had been kept always in view as a predominant aim with each one, and not without response. A passing incident may be given in illustration of this; it was not known at the time, because this tenderness of the elder to the younger, and the consequent trust of the younger in each older heart, was an under-current, not asking notice, but flowing on, and only to be known by the bright fertility of that English home. Jane had been out on a distant excursion with her uncle, and Matilda had gone with them. On their return, Jane did not see her young cousins, but Matilda found Isabelle in trouble. It did not seem to be the consequence of any disgrace, but in some way she had got out of humour;

all that was required was that Isabelle should recover herself; but this she could not do; the cloud was there, and wanted a sunbeam. Matilda saw and heard, and hastened to her room; there she opened her desk, wrote a little note, all love, without reference to any present distress, chose from her treasures a little gift that she knew would please poor Isabelle, added a sixpence from her purse—and in that Rectory a piece of silver was accounted wealth by its children—did up the little packet, and entrusted it to Charley, who found poor Isabelle in her gloom. Isabelle opened the parcel, read the note; its words unfroze her heart, its treasures were priceless in the gushing feeling that they won, the little housewife to keep for her own, and the sixpence to spend for the poor; she had wanted something to unbind her gloom, and this had done it, the *love* had done it, and in her heart it sank down to its depths; in that moment her sense of tenderness was deepened for a lifetime. This passed as a mere incident of the moment, unnoticed by any, yet it proved that the law of sympathy lay uppermost, and that is the secret of living to bless. Matilda was only four years older than Isabelle, a difference of age which in too many homes would be thought to present no claim to self-forgetting ministering care.

When Jane first visited Marian's room her interest found the warmest expression there. The window, like Jane's, was a casement, but at Marian's window the rose and white jessamine looked in and clustered around; her writing-table stood near it, and books, garments for the poor, drawings

and engravings on the wall, enriched it in every part. Jane's eyes rested on one portrait, it hung partly hidden from observation, but a glance was enough for Jane to read truly. She made no inquiry with reference to it, but sitting alone there with Marian, the sister's heart at length found voluntary utterance. She showed the picture to Jane—it was a portrait of her brother—and then sitting down again by her side, she said, 'O, how strange is the varying feeling of which one heart is capable! Caprice of feeling, it sometimes seems almost as if it might be called! I have hardly dared to let that picture be visible, lest any one should notice it, and speak to me of him, and yet to you I could show it. O dear Jane, you have been sent to our home as an angel of blessing! Since you came my heart-heaviness seems to have yielded, and the sunshine of life dawns again on my eyes. I do not mean that I have ever been melancholy, but the suffering at times has been overwhelming, and Earth seemed to be seen through a mist. It is mercy to have the veil lifted, and to be able to look not only on Heaven, but on Earth, in the brightness God has given.'

'O, how terrible that "shadow of death" must be!' Jane replied; 'terrible I mean to those who are left here in the shadow, not to the one who passes through it to the brightness beyond!'

'It would be wrong,' Marian replied, 'to let you, who have never known it, believe that it has only terribleness to those who are left, or that those left on earth have only the *shadow*. O no, it is not so; there is a passing *through*

the shadow, and a dwelling beyond it in conscious communion still with the departed that sustains the heart! But it is also true that the shadow rests here; and the two portions must be both ours, the shadow here—the joy there. Nothing severs the sense of spiritual companionship there; and the shadow here may be lightened, it has been for me by your coming. All bears the dear remembrance still, each trace, each record is the same, but the shadow over them is lightened, and that by the love that sent you here among us.'

Jane listened with the intensity of one who hears of solemnities personally unknown; from Marian's words she learned that it is possible to dwell on earth in such communion of heart with another, as that the personal separation of the world of nature, and the world of spirit, shall not have power to destroy the sense of actual companionship. This feeling instantly and for the future illumined to Jane the dark shadow of Death, when for a moment any thought of possible separation from those most dear came over her heart; while it elevated and hallowed all her earthly intercourse with the most loved of her life, that what Marian realised with her departed Brother might be hers—if separation from the most loved of earth should ever be her lot below.

'I cannot conceive,' Jane's father said one day to the village pastor, 'how it is that you have stayed on immoveably here on such a starving stipend?'

'I did not,' that pastor replied, 'enter the sacred ministry for its emolument, but for the labour of love that it offered me. I have had lack of nothing; our children have

been as happy, clad in their simple print dresses, as if they had been robed in the costliest work of the loom; they have gathered their education as they could from their mother, from me, with each other, and alone; their minds are all as unfettered and fresh as the morning, and their hearts, I trust, under an influence higher than that of Earth. They are ready for every claim upon them; and as I said before, they gather knowledge very much as they can—the advantage of which, I believe, is that they gather it far more naturally, and it assimilates more as nutriment, and less as mere acquirement. The mental and moral *atmosphere* children grow up in has, I am sure, far more to do with what they are than the lesson-books they study. If that atmosphere be a perfectly natural one, not made up of elements constrained into it, but circulating around the children with an effortless flow, like the air they breathe, they will be influenced by it; and if its elements are, as far as may be, pure, and tender, and intelligent, the children of the home will grow up to witness to the native air they have breathed.'

'But have you not found a parochial necessity for alms beyond your power to bestow?'

'No; I never from the first looked upon my position as one of personal almsgiving. My children share their bread with the hungry, and I am always thankful to dispense the offerings of those who are willing to trust our knowledge of the poor. Our farmers, at my request, cart our own coals in their empty waggons, and coals in sufficient quantities for our poor to buy them at a lower price than they would other-

wise pay through the winter. Our people are very poor, a dry crust is often the widow's only meal, but we all struggle on together—cheered by each other's love, and poor as they are, the Scriptural order is maintained—"So hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel"—a temporal blessing from their hand is often brought to my door. Now and then I make a petition to some distant friend, and you would imagine it a public festival on the distribution of a few blankets, or similar gifts. The blessing of living poor among the far poorer is, that my children have no idea of wasteful self-indulgence, while their young hearts are as generous as the earth on which they tread. And they have learned the pleasure of self-denial in ministering to others.'

'But have you no future anxiety for your children?'

O! believe me, the blessing of the future has its root in the present to a degree often far beyond what we realise! Humbly I may look up to my God and say that my first and last aim is, with all that I have, to honour Him—my substance, my children, myself; and will He be less faithful to me than I aim to be in all things to Him? If by God's grace my children depart not from the path they are treading, I have no more fear for their future on earth, than if the words had been audibly spoken from Heaven that all things shall work for their good. My desire is not to hedge them up from all trial, but to prepare them to meet it; a simple, healthful, self-forgetting youth is, I am sure, the best natural preparation for after-life; "Loving-favour is better than

silver or gold,"—the best of all earthly security that our children will be cared for through life, is the certainty that they will be loved, as we know the unselfish heart always will be. But trust ascends higher, and rests on the God that hath fed me all my life—on Him faith reposes; He trusted these children to me; I trust them to Him!'

It was a lovely summer evening, and Marian and Jane went out to walk in the meadows, that were shaded on one side by a long line of wood. On their way they stopped to call upon some of the cottagers. The last little dwelling they entered was one whose bright garden without, and look of order and comfort within, excited at once a feeling of interest. The aged people who lived there were both at home—the old man just returned from his work. He welcomed Marian with more expression than Jane had heard before from the lips of those village men; for most of them were very silent. But this old man made his welcome heard as well as felt; and Jane, a stranger to them, was glad when Marian lingered on in the cottage. The old man had a wasted figure; he looked too small and thin for toil; no charm of form or features; but he had a touching power about his words, a touching melancholy power, that was more easily listened to than answered. There lay his Bible beside him, and it was evident that he lived too much within it to feel that anything unusual could be seen in that labour-soiled dress and that large open Bible together. There was a different feeling in this cottage to that which had been breathed in any other. Jane had been with Marian, where the labouring peasant's piety

lived in all its loveliness and hallowing simplicity. Jane had been with Marian, where the poor within their homes were hungering and thirsting for heavenly refreshment, where deaf ears listened, and dim eyes beamed with tearful brightness, as they caught from Marian's lips the words of Life. And Jane had been with Marian where the poor on the couch of sickness and the bed of death were laid, not at the Beautiful Gate of the earthly Jerusalem's temple, but at the Gate of the Jerusalem above, asking a heavenly benison from those who drew near, while they waited until attendant angels bore them within. But not one had been like this; and yet it was not the faith, it was not the hope found there, for these faltered forth in imperfect expression: it was the trembling tones that breathed from the heart of one who seemed to feel he stood *alone* on earth—alone in his sin, alone in his utter helplessness, alone in his determination to acknowledge to the last that in him there dwelt *no good thing*. No words of Scripture passed his lips, yet his soul—if man could judge—lived only in the covert of that Word. His eye was fixed on Marian as he spoke; and at his heart-penetrating words her face gathered a sadness, blending with its love, as she talked with that old man.

At length she rose to go, and as they wandered on to long green meadows, where the evening sunbeam and the evening shadows fell, they both were silent; until at last Jane broke the silence with, 'Tell me of that old man.'

'I thought,' said Marian, 'he would win your interest. I always go alone to him, but I felt I could take you: he is

one of the deepest interests of my life, and I am always happy, yet always sad with him.'

'What is his history?' asked Jane.

'O! it was a dark one—in his heart all sin, in his life all evil—except that worst of all, a false profession. He was a lawless sinner, the bane and terror of the neighborhood: how bad, I cannot tell you. Neither kindness in any form, nor legal punishment, could subdue him; and he seemed desperate enough for anything. I heard in my childhood of this dark character, and the dreadful den of crime his cottage-home was made. I knew all means had been tried; but it was strongly impressed upon my mind, that not only all means, but every individual ought to try, for I thought even then, "Who can tell but that God may be gracious?" The Sabbath—the holiest day—seemed the best for me to try. I woke with the early sunbeams, and rose and prayed for him; prayed that that day might bring the prodigal home, the sinner to his Saviour. No early Sabbath morning lives in my thoughts so vividly as that—the exquisite loveliness, the glory through my open window of the rejoicing land, I alone, with the fragrant flowers that bloomed around my window,—alone with them and Heaven. Intense and vivid was the sense of the sinner lost, the sinner found, the sinner safe in Heaven. And could this—might this be for him? My Bible said it might; faith bid me hope; and love invited me to ask. My brother, now in that calm rest above, was then my life's companion. I told only him, and he, when the morning service was over, walked with me. I can see his heavenly face as it

was in expression then, when I left him near the cottage, in a shady nook, concealed alone, that if I called he might run to my side. I looked upon him as he stood, so fair and gravely bright, under the tree's dark shadow, and turned my trembling steps away. It was the day of grace for that long-hardened sinner; and, to exalt the mercy, it was sent by the feeblest agency of Earth. It was a fearful thing to me to pass the gate, go through the dogs, and enter at that door where I had never been before. I knocked, and then went in. I saw the casks of spirits, the table spread with costly fare, the men around it; and the darkest look that ever fell on me was from that poor woman's face. I stood behind the chairs of those at table, the old man was before me; I trembled almost too much to speak, but begged that he would no longer break the Sabbath-day, but would come to church. He said he would "some day." I asked him when? He said, "Next Sunday." It was an awful moment when I answered and said, "You may be then in hell!" I could not have said more, for power was gone. I had no need to utter more,—his knife and fork fell from his hand, and he replied, "I will come,—I will come to-day!" "Will you all come?" I asked. They said they would; and I went away. He did not break his word: he came. God met the sinner on his way, blessed to his soul the preaching of the word,—and he is what you see him now. Years do but little change him: he looked to me as old as now when I first entered at his door, and he holds on in trembling, clinging hope. It always seems as if the Sabbath dawn had a more hallowed charm for

him than for any of our people; he does not know how it is linked in close association with him,—how once it was devoted to him; but though his feeble frame is worn with six days' work, he rises in the Sabbath's morning prime. His is the only dwelling that would offer, to any one who wished to find it, perfect repose, even before the morning service; there he and the Bible hallow the early sacred hours. And tenderly now he, and his wife also, can smile on me. It was not until after the lapse of years that she spoke to me of my visit when a child, saying with strong feeling, "He would take no more dinner that day; he said, 'To think of such a young creature coming to warn an old sinner like me!' he was a changed man from that hour." O, the countless looks of love that have recompensed that one dark scowl!—But I do not know that she has any hold on Heaven. It is still, as it has ever been, intercourse from which one turns in saddened tenderness. But you can well believe how *despair* of any soul is now impossible to me. And when I hear the most hardened given up, as it were, in the tone in which they are spoken of sometimes, and spoken to, I can only turn to Heaven, and say, "O, if they did but realise, as well as confess, that Thou canst save to the uttermost; that there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared; then they would work in deeper love, in brighter faith, in stronger patience!" and then, "who can tell whether God will be gracious?" "God doth not respect any person, yet doth He devise means that His banished be not expelled from Him."'

'Where are the little ones?' asked their father one morn-

ing, at the breakfast-table: all except Marian having suddenly disappeared after prayers, and 'the little ones' being the term by which their father still called his growing-up family.

'I do not know,' said their mother; 'but we will not wait for them, they are sure to return soon.'

So the breakfast began. Marian's cheek had flushed at the inquiry, for it was Marian's birthday, and she, probably, suspected some design. Their father always said, he marked the year by the Church's festivals, and could not add a record of family birthdays; yet, whenever reminded on the days, he would smile, and bless them then. Marian felt doubtful of what each moment might develope; but her suspense was not long,—a little chorus of voices soon broke on the ear through the open window, the singers as yet unseen.

Chorus.—'Listen, listen, sister sweet,
We thy Birthday morning greet!'

Recitative.—'I, the Lark, aloft with dawn,
Chanting o'er the dewy corn!'

'I, the purple Bulfinch gay,
Piping to the buds of May!'

'I, the Thrush, that carol light,
When the day-spring gilds the night.'

'I, the Owl, tee-whit! tee-whoo!
Welcomed by the wiser few.'

Chorus.—'Singing, singing, sister sweet,
We thy Birthday morning greet!'

As the song concluded, the group appeared in view, dressed in garlands, and bearing in their hands a little tray

covered with sprigs of sweet-brier, among which lay their offerings of love; putting the little tray into their mother's lap, they each one threw themselves into Marian's arms, and gave her a clinging kiss; and then, with all the nature of their characters, were most anxious to place the little tray to best effect in the centre of the table, and Marian was only to have partial glimpses through clustering leaves until the repast was over.

May cast one or two inquiring glances upon Jane, but Jane, touched with the incident, failed to meet them; so bright little May thought this was a subject, no doubt, quite clear of all shadow of housekeeping, and therefore to be freely talked of.

'Did you not think our poetry rather good, papa?'

'O yes; first rate! Was it Shakespeare?'

'No, papa.'

'O, now, May,' exclaimed Charley, 'why cannot you let a thing alone when it is done?'

'I may talk about it, Charley, because you know you made the poetry, not I! Did not you think that clever, papa,—my being the bulfinch, and singing to the buds of *May?*'

'Yes, indeed, the conclusion of the couplet was most apposite; it quite took me by surprise.'

'Nonsense, May!' said Charley again; 'you make papa turn everything into ridicule.'

'I propose,' said Jane, 'to set the words to music after breakfast, when we have all peeped under the leaves. The whole aviary of birds must attend to direct me.'

CHAPTER XXV.

The musical performance after breakfast was a very animated and entertaining one, and the concert lasted long. Marian was amongst the little group in her own bright interest at the commencement, but, after a time, they suddenly missed her, and Isabelle said she had gone away ten minutes before. It was touching to see how fast the sense of her absence lowered the tone of the mirth; they had all in their eagerness been pressing around Jane, and all except Isabelle had fancied Marian behind them still. They now thought the musical performance had attained to its perfection, and they wanted Marian to appeal to. Isabelle flew away, saying, 'I will run and find her.'

The little group was again enlivened by Marian's presence; but Jane discerned that the day held on but tremblingly for Marian; and when the performance was pronounced perfect for evening rehearsal, she rose from the piano, and said to Marian, 'I want you to take me some long, lonely walk alone with you,—a walk that may live with me in memory of the day.'

Marian had spent an hour with her mother after breakfast, before the musical entertainment began, and she now

responded to Jane's wish as to a proposal that would best please her. It was one of those days of August when the fresh breeze that blows over the reapers has almost the vigour of the first autumnal air; the land lay all golden with its harvest fields, and the dark-green foliage waved richly above the bright grain. Jane and Marian walked a little way through corn-fields and lanes, and then entered a long line of lovely meadows, with high ground here and there, planted almost like little groves, with oak-trees. They climbed up beneath one beautiful cluster of trees, and sat down. The village lay in the distance before them, with the church in full view, and the corn-fields and reapers; the Rectory was hidden by its trees. They sat looking on the landscape in that silence of feeling that questions its own power of expression.

But Jane's presence was so gently—so brightly sustaining, that Marian soon gathered power. Words were given to the deep channel of feeling, and she spoke of the departed again.

'It is a trembling day,' she said to Jane; 'any day when one's self is the object in any way of the feeling of others must be so; and this is only the second birthday I have passed since my brother was taken: but it is a day of inexpressible happiness, too,—for, since you came, the heavy shadow has parted, and the sunbeams, which always rested above it, have penetrated and flowed in beneath it again. The shadow does not press heavily now, but only hangs its softening shade above the brightness below. I was so glad when you asked me to walk! I could not have walked alone to-day, nor with any one, without a great effort, except you,

because my heavy thoughts can flow out in expression to you, and lose themselves in your brightness. We used to walk in these meadows often together,—he was so fond of them! The vision of his presence is everywhere around, but I would not part with the sense of it, for a heavenly light seems to rest where he trod. O, his memory is blessed!'

'Yes,' again said Marian, in answer to an expression of Jane's; 'I wish I could make you know him. Those cottages that lie before us could bear witness to much of what he was; but few, if any, could tell all. Yet it was possible to see him often, and not know him, for any atmosphere in which he could not breathe freely shut him up: but he was capable of drawing out into closest companionship the deepest intellectual and spiritual power, and of lighting up all into interest who were not disinclined to respond.'

'His companionship,' she continued, 'was my best education, for his thoughts always kept on high ground, and yet their elevating influence was ceaselessly relieved from all strain by the playfulness of his wit, which was ever gleaming out, and the tenderness of his clinging affection. Next to our parents, it is impossible to say what our home owes to him. He was always the first to arrest any wrong tone of conversation we might ourselves be getting into. "Do not let us talk about people!" he would often say, and lead on at once himself to something else. He had the strongest feeling about the narrowing effect of making individuals the subject of conversation; he seemed to think that no heart allowing itself to get into that habit could ever acquire the

same influence over others, or retain itself the brightness and the glow of general feeling; he was sure that it narrowed the heart, and lowered the mind, and constrained the free intercourse of life; and he always kept watch over us. O! a brother's watch of ceaseless interest and tender affection—feeling you, and all that concerns you, his own personal interest—it is impossible to describe what it is! If Earth had but more of such brothers it would grow nearer to Heaven!'

'Did the poor people love him?' asked Jane.

'O yes, all loved him who knew him,—who really knew him! and by some he seemed instantly known, though, by some others, never. But it would be a long unfolding to tell you how or why the poor loved him. There were many to welcome him from their rest in Heaven; but you can well imagine what the intercourse of such a spirit among them must have been. And often he would come from his visits to them, or his books, in the twilight hour, and finding me, would say, "Now, Marian, come and rest." And then he would sit and play his own wild melodies, composing as he played, and stringing on the unbroken chain the sweetest airs he knew, until his form grew indistinct in the dim light of evening. And he would sing to me with a voice so high, clear, and beautiful! In our walks, too, he would sing; and oftenest of all to me, he sang, "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of our God." And now, when sad, I seem to hear him singing still, "There is a river; there is a river;" as though he would remind of the bright joys of Paradise, and the sweet streams of Earth.'

'Did he preach many times?'

'Yes, for a few months; and not one who heard him then, I think, can easily forget. But it can ill be told, the hearts that listened and the tears that fell. He was dying then, and could with difficulty climb the pulpit stairs, though when there he poured forth an unbroken, an unfettered flow; and hearts there are that bless those dying words. He rests from his labours, and his blessed works do follow him.'

'Did he know that he was dying?'

'Yes; and at first he wished to live. He said to me, "I long to give a life-time to my work. Heaven looks all blessedness, but Earth has so much suffering, so much sin, that I would gladly live to work for God, if it might be His will, before I entered into rest." Once, when he had been told that his life could not be long, he came straight to me, and sitting down in my arm-chair he said, with perfect calmness, "I find I cannot live—they tell me so; and, dear Marian, my one feeling about Earth is, that if I had lived it would have been, I trust, to witness against SIN! Oh! sin is not thought of as it ought to be by many who profess to know its evil. Sin is not hated—not fled from! When I am dead, if papa should raise a stone in memory of me, I want you to have written on it, "THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH."'

'Had he spoken so of sin before?'

'O yes! his own life seemed to flow like a clear stream to Heaven, and yet his sense of sin was inexpressible. Years before, when he first went to College, he was talking one day

with me, and he said, "Marian, often all that I can feel, all that I can say to God, is gathered up into that one short prayer, 'Do not abhor me!'" Such was even then his view God and His holiness, and himself in his sinfulness; but he is sinless and with the Holy now, and here the impress of his lost presence is love, and light, and blessing!'

In that evening's twilight Marian said to Jane, 'Will you play to me?'

Jane turned and looked inquiringly, but did not speak in answer; and Marian said, 'I shall be so glad if you will! I have always dreaded music in this hour, since I lost *his;* but if you would play to me this evening it would seem like a blessed step upon his sacred foot-print,—covering and shielding it! and then I could bear any to pass over the same ground. Do play to me this evening!'

Jane turned and played on long to Marian.

'How do you succeed with your school?' Jane's father inquired of his brother-in-law, not long after their arrival.

'Well, our school is one of our many bright spots, and its history is this. On our first coming here we found only a dame's school, which practically resolved itself into sitting still at the shaking of the rod, and learning,—I hardly know what,—for both boys and girls left long before they had, for the most part, acquired the art of reading. My wife threw her energy into it, the school increased, and an assistant-teacher of course became necessary. My dear wife has literally here made her own material before she has had it to use, but "she worketh willingly," and "her *children*" on

every side, "arise up and call her blessed!" Pardon me, for life is a wonderful retrospect, and her presence has been far more than the sunbeam ever gilding the stream! but this assistant-teacher was the next requisite. My wife chose one of the most promising village girls, carrying on her education; which, however, was a very simple one. The girl possessed so much natural ability, that we finally resolved upon making a further effort for her. We advanced the money necessary for her to go for a short time to a training-school; and then our ancient dame becoming quite incapable of any exertion, even with the aid of another assistant-teacher, we offered our trained mistress to make her first trial with us, not with any intention of keeping her, for I did not suppose the art she had acquired would exactly meet my ideas for a village population, and the stipend I felt would be below her capabilities. But here she is to this day, almost as much a child of my wife's as any one beneath our roof, and as happy in poverty as we are!'

'You did not, then, find any cause for objecting to the trained system when you tested it?'

'O, it is by no means the system I have tested, but the teacher! She is wise enough to take all the personal benefit of the training for her own mind, without compelling her school into fetters. I never could have given in to the scream, and the rap, and the rush, and all the mechanical education of mind. But Rachel, our young mistress, has disciplined her own powers, and leaves the children in quite sufficient freedom and repose. She has a very large school, for the

children come from several of the villages around, where they have no parochial instruction; and she has several young assistants. I believe we have no undue stimulating, or over-pressure of mind; but then I keep the ratio of learning at a moderate amount.'

'What accomplishments do you profess to teach?'

'On that line I shall do better if I refer you to Marian, she will be delighted to give you the details.'

So Marian entered on the subject with her uncle and aunt, saying, with a smile, 'O, we are not very clever! We live among the wild flowers, looking up to Heaven, and trying to brighten earth, as they do, but not much beyond. If I am to come to particulars, you must pardon their domestic minuteness. We make a great point of good and easy reading; the best reader, both with the boys and girls, has a prize every year, only the same child never has the same prize twice, except for general good conduct; and if the same child wins that prize a second year, then papa always adds a duplicate prize for the child that comes next. In needle-work we have three prizes, one to the best plain-worker, a second to the best mender—the children are taught to mend their own clothes, and their fathers' shirts, and their mothers' gowns, and a prize is given to the best mender; all our household linen is repaired by them, and they also darn stockings for practice—the third prize for work is to the best darner. Our prizes are given at our annual "frolic," as our people call the *fête* day; and as all the children of our large Sunday-school, which includes many who are almost

more than children, are with us then, we have some prizes which include all. We have a prize for the one who has been most regular at the weekly school, and another for the one most constant on the Sunday. We have a prize for the child who has learned most Scripture in the year, in each school; and a prize for the child who has remembered most of the sermons each Sunday. Then we have some few other prizes—one for the child who keeps the little cottage garden the neatest and best; another for the child who has a character without fault from his employer. But I am afraid I shall quite weary you, and hardly repeat my lesson perfectly. Any child who can be reported as having made a steady effort to be diligent and good has a little reward—a token of approval and encouragement, and all enjoy the *fête* together. Our children in service always try to get their holiday then. Each girl who lives three years in one place, and has a good character, receives a patchwork quilt made by the children of the school; this is the only reward we give to the young women in service: the servant lads have a gift from papa under the same circumstances.'

'Do you teach them geography?'

'Well, in our fashion we teach it! We have three good maps in the schoolroom, one of their own country, one of the Holy Land, and one of the world. They learn of countries and places in constant association with the existence and progress of Christianity; and I believe the association of this one great idea has given a reality to their little measure of acquirement, which has not left it merely in the memory, but

has helped to enlarge their minds and influence their hearts. Often when a little hand has put its farthing or its halfpenny into mine for the poor heathen, I see a glance raised to the map of the world, as if some indefinite estimate were forming in the little peasant's mind as to what influence his free-will offering might have on the state of that world—not a delusion, for it has its influence! It is more an *idea* and a *feeling* that we try to give them, than any laboured acquirement of names; so that I am afraid you would find them technically very far behind most schools under so good a mistress as ours: but I think, if moral feeling could be estimated, you would find that our children would not be the lowest in its attainment?'

'Do you teach them history?'

'Yes, in the same fashion; we lead them on through a connected line as far as the events of the Bible will carry them; we go on with the simplest possible line of history until it links itself to England, then we take up our own sovereigns, and tell them enough to interest them, as we go through the whole line, encircling with all the feeling we can the reign now hallowing the throne of their country for them. But we teach them nothing beyond, we only try to give history one clear stream through their minds. I fear they could hardly give you more than two or three dates, and a school-inspector would give them a black mark at once; but yet they have an *idea* and a *feeling* of history, which I do not think they would have had—if we and they had spent time on the general acquirement of as much knowledge as

was possible. They have mental repose enough to catch our feeling; the few facts they learn have a life in them which I think will preserve them, when the mere acquirements of memory would have passed hopelessly away.'

It was not long before a visit was paid to the school by Marian's uncle and aunt. There was Rachel, seated on a chair at her low table, and her peaceful school around her, and bright were the looks of love and expectation that were raised from young faces on Marian. There was no *exhibition* of anything. Marian's uncle and aunt talked with the children, and questioned them as they liked, and the children greeted them with a song and a hymn. They were all busy at work, boys plaiting and knitting, and the girls at needlework.

'Tell my aunt of your party at Christmas,' said Marian.

The children looked from Marian to their visitors, and back again to Marian, as unwilling to begin: but Marian was never disobeyed; she waited in expectation, and a little boy replied, 'We have a party!' but there the history concluded.

'Who comes to your party?' asked Marian's uncle.

'Grandfather, Grandmother, Uncle Billy, Poor old blind Tom, Old lame widow Jenks comes up in a cart,' &c. &c., many a little voice shouted in response.

'A party indeed!' said Marian's uncle; 'your grandfathers and grandmothers, and all the old people! would you invite me?'

'Yes,' said a little girl in her courtesy; 'No,' said a boy in his truth; and there the question ended.

'But tell my uncle what you do for your party?'

'We wait upon them!'

'Tell him what you do besides?'

'We sing to them.'

'And what else do you do?'

'We work for them.'

'You wait upon them, sing to them, and work for them—that must be pleasant indeed,' again responded Marian's uncle.

'Yes,' said Marian, looking on the children, 'we are happy indeed! They make a little present for each aged person in the village every year. They knit a pair of stockings, or plait a hat, or a bonnet, or the girls make some articles of dress; sometimes it is a nice large basket we plait for an old man—is it not? and then we have a little play ourselves in the schoolroom, and the kind farmers send us some apples, don't they?' asked Marian, and with the 'yes, yes!' of the little assembly, the conference ended; with a parting smile on the children, and a kind parting glance at Rachel—whom any looker-on might have longed to take as a model for a village mistress. With all the simplicity of village dress and pleasant aspect; power seen at once in her gentle repose of manner; she had no awkward bend in place of a respectful curtsey, but in her whole deportment showed a superior mind; while her expression of countenance told that she had gathered knowledge, and light, and love, from sources high and pure enough to keep her lowly-hearted. Such was Rachel, and such that village-school; how many might be like it, with far less of pecuniary expenditure than

they now require; but, it may be, with more love, and faith, and patient prayer. The wealth of the purse and the energies of the mind are more easily devoted than those affections of the soul which are linked with influences divine, but who would fall back on the lower resources, and work in the mere turmoil of time, when he might live, and move, and have his being in a higher atmosphere, and bring the elements of that atmosphere to bear upon his work at every point?

CHAPTER XXVI.

Before the sickle was put to the corn, the annual fête was held at the village Rectory. Rachel, the village schoolmistress, went to the farm-houses a week before the day; there were several farmers not in the parish who attended the church for the truth's sake; to these also Rachel went, told them that the day for the "frolic" was fixed, and asked if she might come round for any contribution from them. Then came Rachel's joy in receiving the stores, as she went from house to house with her helpers and her baskets; and on the frolic morning, the first event after breakfast was the visit to Rachel's bright cottage, to see her tables covered with bread, butter, milk, and plum-cakes, the kind—the willing contributions of love.

The details of all the glad preparations for the glad "frolic" of the day can be easily conceived; the cutting of green boughs for shade in the meadow or the barn, as the weather might portend; every garden furnished its flowers; the young servants were there keeping holiday, and all rendering their cheerful aid. The farmers' daughters came down in white aprons to Rachel, and the bread, and butter, and cake were cut by their hands.

Every one smiled on that day—every heart seemed to catch the contagion of joy. Even in the first year of mourning for the loved and departed, the sisters all wore white on that day, for they felt that their garments of grief, reminding each villager of the general bereavement, would cloud all the joy; so they put on their garments of gladness, and the tear stood in many an eye that looked on them that day in their raiment of white.

Charley prepared all the children's cards of invitation—small pieces of pasteboard, with the day and the hour of assembling on one side, and a little seal on the other. The friends assembled at the house; the farmers came when they could, and when they liked, to look on in the meadow. No child could pass the meadow-gate except they presented the little ticket. They waited in the eagerness of expectation, until Marian came towards them. O how dear was Marian to the hearts of the children! She took each little ticket from the impatient hands, as the children flocked round her. Marian wore her flowers, red and white, in the folds of her snowy dress; and the children came in their flowers—the boys red and the girls white, and they ran about as free as possible in the meadow. And the fathers of the children hastened home from their work, and came straight to the meadow; and the elder brothers came also, and sat on the sloping banks and watched the scene of young life, in which many of them had once borne a part. Then the parents sat round on rude seats prepared, and a short address was made to all; after this the prizes were given, and though the num-

ber of them was not great, yet the interest was most animating. The prizes were very varied; books, little trunks, with lock and key—to hold a child's books and treasures; a pail, or a little washing-tub, or a box-iron, to be used by the young possessor in her home. If the reward for constant good conduct were won by a very young child, it would be a Bible of good type or a little wooden arm-chair, or some other suitable gift that might survive through another generation to perpetuate the happy memory of successful effort. Then the children had their tea—happy children looking up, with their eyes of gladness and love! and the mothers and fathers looked on; until refreshed—the little ones ran merrily to play, and the rest of the tea, the bread and butter, and cake, were handed round to their parents, and brothers, and the village guests, who were glad of the passing refreshment; and Matilda, and May, and Isabelle, waited on them; and Charley, in his kindness, ran off to the few bed-ridden poor within reach, that they might catch a glimpse of the gladness, by seeing him come in laden with some little refreshment for them, in order that they might feel that they were not forgotten. And the merry shouts of the village children broke in peals on the ear as each side hailed the victor, or made merry at a failure.

The chief interest of all the games was the race of the boys: all ran in it for practice, though the younger ones expected not to win, but only looked forward to the time when they should be victors in their turn. All watched this with interest; the prize was always the same—the flowers

worn by Marian. The race was the whole length of the field twice *run*, and the same boy must be victor at each end. A sentinel stood at the further end to see who came in first, and a log of wood, or some pedestal as rough, on which the victor stood to take breath, when one shout was given to salute and encourage him, and from which he had at the signal to take his first step in the long line of the second race again. At the other end stood the expectant guests, and Marian, a little in advance, the first who reached her feet had the flowers from her hand, and the cheers and shouts around the boy always marked the point of the evening's highest excitement. If the same boy did not win each time of running, other games were turned to, and the race tried again. The flowers were never given except to the double winner. All shared in the mirth and the joy of the evening. At seven o'clock the children were dismissed, some having far to go; then the invited guests returned back again to the Rectory to tea in the drawing-room. Such of the farmers as could be prevailed on to come, were entertained by Charley, with Matilda and May to assist him at tea in the dining-room. If the guests were too numerous for the room, some of them sat outside the windows, and the cheerfulness was only increased by the rustic accommodation; and tired limbs and beating hearts found slumbering rest when the sun of that earliest day of August had descended.

'And so Mrs. Chripps is coming this evening?' the father of that bright Rectory family remarked one morning at breakfast; 'you are going to introduce her to your aunt and

cousin, I suppose?' he said, looking round with a smile on his children.

'Yes,' said Marian, 'they must know our dear Mrs. Chripps.'

'I think,' continued the father, 'that it is a scheme of mamma's to get me lectured for my last Sunday morning sermon. Mamma does not like to scold me herself, so she sends for Mrs. Chripps, who most certainly will.'

'O papa, what capital fun!' exclaimed Charley, rubbing his hands with satisfaction; 'really, aunt, it is one of the richest things you can conceive to see Mrs. Chripps drive papa hard up, and he always gives in, and pleads for forgiveness!'

'For shame, Charley!' said May, 'you will make aunt think that Mrs. Chripps must be fierce; and you know papa only "gives in," because he says Mrs. Chripps is always in the right.'

'So he does, my little May,' replied the father, 'and he will help you to defend Mrs. Chripps all the world over.'

'O papa,' again exclaimed Charley, 'you need not do that; Mrs. Chripps could fight a battle a great deal better than you!'

'Her neighbours' battles, Charley, but not her own! I fancy; you never yet saw Mrs. Chripps stand up for herself?'

'No, papa, you are right; but she can go at it wonderfully! I don't believe any one could hold out against her.'

'This Mrs. Chripps,' said the father, addressing their relatives, 'is an elderly lady, residing in the next parish,—a

neglected parish, I am sorry to say; but Mrs. Chripps seems to have been planted in it as a foster-mother, and a most devoted one she is. She walks in all weathers to our church, and though by no means wealthy, she is the most beneficent friend we have in the neighbourhood. She contributes most generously to our school, though she never will come to our frolic; she says her love of gambols is over, but not her thankfulness that there are those who can attend upon them. She is altogether a very original character.'

'I like originality,' Jane's mother replied, 'and I do not think it a very plentiful production of the age, so I shall be prepared to welcome your friend.'

'I am sure Mrs. Chripps is original enough! Charley,' said May, rather reproachfully, thinking in that line to draw out a full admission from her brother.

'Yes, aunt,' said Charley, looking past his sister, 'Mrs. Chripps is as original as Paddy Blake's echo! Do you know that when Paddy Blake said, "How do you do?" his echo made answer, "Very well, I thank you."'

'Indeed! that was a most original echo,' replied his aunt; but May did not quite relish the fun.

'Do come, and take a little walk with me in the garden,' said May that morning to Jane.

'I do so want just to tell you about Mrs. Chripps, because she is a charming person, and you might not quite know her at first. I wish Charley did not talk about people. Marian always says it is much better to leave every one to judge for themselves. Indeed Mrs. Chripps is not fierce!'

'I never mistake courage for ferocity! I assure you,' said Jane; 'so you may be perfectly easy as to my discrimination.'

'No, only perhaps when you see her, what Charley said might make you think her a little fierce; but, indeed, she lives to do good, and her heart is so kind! I shall be miserable if you do not like her; all that about Paddy Blake did not at all apply to Mrs. Chripps.'

'No, I should not think it did,' replied Jane, 'only you see it made a little fun, which was what Charley wanted just then. Do you know he had before talked to me of Mrs. Chripps, and he told me that she was the delight of his life!'

'Did he? O, then you will be sure to understand her,' replied little bright May; 'I am so glad!' And she ran to her china.

Mrs. Chripps arrived that evening to tea, and with a hurried 'How do you do?' to each, and the addition of 'I am very happy to be introduced to you; I am sure I am very glad to see you!' to the guests, Mrs. Chripps sat down among the social family party. When you looked at Mrs. Chripps, sitting stiff and straight on the edge of her chair, her countenance strongly lined with age and anxiety, her person altogether small, sharp, and angular, you could have supposed it possible that, naturally, Mrs. Chripps might be a little fierce; sitting there in silence, ready to listen with a sharp attention, and to give instantly a keen answer; but after May's assurances to the contrary, the least that could be done was to suspend a personal judgment for the present.

Mrs. Chripps maintained unbroken silence. At length, after several attempts at conversation, the village Rector remarked, 'Our friends to whom we wished to introduce you this evening, Mrs. Chripps, take a great interest in our poor people.'

'I daresay they do. I am glad to hear it, I am sure,' responded Mrs. Chripps hurriedly, and relapsed into silence again.

'We found dreadful poverty and misery in London!' said Jane, by way of another attempt to draw out a response.

'I am sorry for it; sorry for it, I am sure!' replied Mrs. Chripps, and again sat silent in her upright position on the edge of her chair.

Charley thought this was no fun; so he slid up behind Mrs. Chripps, and privately whispered, 'Papa is terribly afraid you will catch him up about his sermon on Sunday morning.'

'Very true, my dear; very true!' responded Mrs. Chripps, most audibly and hurriedly. 'Did not like it at all! Mr. Mills, it is your sermon we are at. Never heard you preach so ill in my life; did not like it at all—indeed I did not! Pray, was it your own?'

'Yes; I must plead guilty to having composed it once upon a time, but to tell you the truth, I did not much like it myself.'

'O, well then, there's some chance of our not coming off with such fare any more; but pray, how came you to preach it at all?'

'Well, I was fairly incapable of head-work last week. I trusted for the afternoon sermon, but I went back to my old college stores for the morning.'

'You had a deal better have trusted for both; that's all I can say. Such preaching may do very well for your colleges! I suppose that is what you train them to there; such rounding up and polishing; don't like it at all! Hearts want something that will grapple with them—not all that smooth hanging together that lays hold of nobody, and that nobody knows how to lay hold of. No use in the world! We want something more clenching than that.'

'Very true, Mrs. Chripps; I said you would not let me off without a good lecture.'

'No; did you?' replied Mrs. Chripps, and the sudden smile of repentant benignity that overspread her unconscious features, was enough to convince any beholder that no fierceness could be lurking within! 'I am sure I have no right to pass censure, a poor creature that just goes to church hungering and thirsting for the great and good things I want; but then I take it hard if the preacher rides above me like that, and sends me home again with no fresh oil in my vessel; but I am sure it is seldom enough I have to say so of you—these four-and-twenty years I have heard the glad tidings flow down from that pulpit! I can witness to that.'

'O, Mrs. Chripps, you always give a sugar-plum to take away the bitter taste of your medicines.'

'Do I?' said Mrs. Chripps, with another of her most genial smiles. 'I am sure it is the least I can do. Only truth must be spoken; there is never so much of it in the world, that I can find, as to let one off from one's own measure.'

Here little bright May thought that her turn might come

in; so she whispered in a rather audible tone, 'Mrs. Chripps, did you see the guardians?'

'See them! my dear; did not I say that I should; and they saw me too—not always the pleasantest sight in the world. Mr. Mills, I do say that it is too much for any woman to bring a set of men to a right mind against their own will. If I had not stood as firm as a post, they never would have done it, and the poor body would have lost house and home in a week; that is, if they had had their way; but it is a mercy there are more wills and more ways than one in this world—if that one is to be a hard one—that is all I can say.'

'But how did you get the point settled, Mrs. Chripps?' asked the Rector.

'How? Why, the right way, to be sure. "Gentlemen," said I, "it is all very well to make new laws if you choose, but you must fit them, and ease them where they press down too heavily, or you will have some day to answer for the working them!" Well, I got nothing but the law! the law! "Gentlemen," said I, "you know very well the law was never made so rigid but what you can ease its hard necessity when there is any reason that you should. I am tolerably aged, and some of you are not young, but I have only one thing to say, If you will not raise a hand for the widow, God helping me, I will! She shall eat of my bread, and drink of my water; and when I have nothing left, which in truth is not a great deal now, you shall give us both an order for the Union, for, in truth, you will not see her there, with my

will, until you see me also! So once for all, gentlemen, will you show what mercy you can to one of the most richly-deserving, or will you send me back with a denial?" Well, then, they talked together, and said they would allow so much. "Gentlemen," I said, "you know that will never keep body and soul together; it will be starving, not living!" So with that they murmured a little, and then added something more, and so I was satisfied. But if you could have seen the poor thing when she found she was to have help enough to struggle along with her poor babes, it was too much for me—I could not stand it! but I shall always speak well of the guardians, for they hearkened to me when I pleaded for the widow, and I am sure I pray God may not turn away their prayer, nor His mercy from them!'

'I quite love Mrs. Chripps,' Jane whispered to May, when she came for her parting kiss after prayers on that evening, and little bright May went in delight to her slumber.

But it is time that we leave that happy village to repose in the sunshine of soul that sheds its pervading influence over many a bright parish in our land. "Blessed of the Lord—for the precious things of Heaven, for the dew and for the deep that coucheth beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills."

CHAPTER XXVII.

When Mrs. Barrington left London she spent two months on a distant estate, and then returned to the Grange to make preparation for an autumn visit from her friend; but when she revisited her Alpine home, her kind inquiring eye instantly discerned a shadow resting over the friends who welcomed her back. The General was constrained in manner, and evidently disquieted. Mrs. North bore an anxious look, and when Mrs. Barrington looked around for the cause, she saw a weight of sadness on the Alpine pastor's brow, and Antonia's smile had lost its sunny light—she retained her cheerful aspect still, but her playful mirth was gone. It was not difficult to guess the cause,—a suit presented, and by authority denied.

Mrs. Barrington asked no questions. None better knew that, of all earthly things, true confidence is most to be waited for in patient tenderness. It was not long before Mrs. North called alone at the Grange, and gave the history. The mutual feeling was an unyielding one, but its consummation, forbidden by the General, who was resolved not to consent to Antonia's entering upon a position which he felt would veil her in life's shade, instead of showing forth her bright

attractions on every side. She was gifted to adorn the highest station, to become the admired of all in her own home, as she had ever been in his; he could not give her to the poor alone. Had Edward Seymour been willing to take a different position, to adopt the style of the surrounding gentry, the General would not have refused his consent, but the orphan child of his brother—his own beautiful Antonia—should never be looked down upon by the world while he had a hand to raise her, a voice to forbid her taking a position not sufficiently elevated in his estimation for one so gifted. Mrs. North had taken a higher view of the subject; in her lonely communings with truth she had seen that it is the elevation of soul, not of circumstances, which gives attractive and commanding influence; she believed that a lowly lot was often appointed to exhibit this great fact more strikingly; her own persuasion was that Antonia, in a cottage, would win from every side the true-hearted of every rank around her; but her own position was a difficult and delicate one; Antonia was not her child, not even her own niece, and she therefore felt it impossible to urge Antonia's uncle to consent to a union that he felt unsuitable for his brother's child.

Mrs. Barrington saw that it was this world's last struggle for supremacy in the veteran soldier's heart: it was cheating him under the specious guise of a guardian's care for his brother's orphan child; but it was the world, and He who had 'overcome the world,' alone could subdue it now, in its last stronghold in the soldier's heart.

Antonia met Mrs. Barrington with her glowing love un-

dimmed, but neither she, nor the Alpine pastor, alluded to the sentenced hope. The General was at first distant in intercourse with Mrs. Barrington; he seemed to have armed himself against an expected appeal, but at length finding Mrs. Barrington the same as ever, and the one painful subject never approached, his former cordiality returned; and after some weeks had passed, he called at the Grange, and introduced the subject. Edward Seymour stood as high as any man living, the General said, in his regard; he had asked to have the very jewel of his home, and yet, the General said, he would not have held out against Antonia's feeling, had not Edward Seymour declared it impossible for him to change his style of life. It was not a pecuniary difficulty—the General would have obviated any question on that ground, it was a point of principle; and therefore, the General, who knew the man, feared the obstacle was a hopeless one. Had it been one of his own daughters he might have yielded, but the child of his brother—his orphaned Antonia, left by that brother to his tenderest care in the moment that his life-blood was ebbing, to allow her to be placed in a position in which she would be deprived of all the accompaniments which belong to her station, would be a slight, in the eye of the world, to which he never would consent. He had to think of what was due to his position, no less than the young Rector had to hold fast by his principle, and under these hopeless circumstances it was a miserable necessity to have to see the shadow resting on the child whom it was his life's object to brighten and shield!

'I suppose,' replied Mrs. Barrington, in her tone of mild decision, 'when two principles clash, the lower principle must be allowed to bend to the higher, or we at once compromise our allegiance to Heaven?'

'I cannot,' the General replied, 'take a step, let the case be what it may, which I feel to be a wrong one, to reach what another may feel to be a right point to adhere to. No, no, let each feel his own way, and abide by the consequences!'

'But if the orphan Antonia is to be sacrificed in the conflict between these opposing principles, the consequences will become more than *personal!* Can you form a probable supposition as to what her father's decision would have been!'

'Yes, yes, he always gave all the circumstantials of station to the winds! As a boy, he was satisfied with the homeliest of all things. A man may walk over all that is conventional in society, but it is a very different question when it comes to the point of depriving a girl like Antonia, of all their enshrinement. And this reminds me of a feature of her nobleness of character. She has from the first shown her submission, and from the day of my denial has never referred to the subject; and, at the time, she did not even name her father! She knew that I was well aware of his views, and she did not appeal from my will even to the feeling she must have known would have been her father's.'

'Such silence,' replied Mrs. Barrington, 'must be far more irresistible than words.'

'It was, it was! and I never can forget it; but think of letting down such nobleness of soul to the homes of the

peasantry for life! I know well enough the world's estimate —"An easy put-off for a girl that far outshone any of my own." I could not stand it, I know I could not!'

'We have seen nobleness dwell among cottages,' said Mrs. Barrington, with a half-reproving smile, 'when the Son of the Blessed made His earthly home among the peasantry of Galilee.'

'Ah, well!' said the General, rising, 'the less of argument on most points the better; it unsettles one's mind, without changing the necessity; but I am glad to have talked it over with you. You can feel for me, I am sure!'

'Yes, indeed I can,' replied Mrs. Barrington, 'for the responsibility is yours before Heaven, as well as before the World—we must beware which we put first!'

When Edward Seymour stood for the last time alone in Antonia's presence, he had said with a passionless aspect, a look from which all earthly emotion seemed for ever sentenced and gone, beneath the touch of hopeless denial, he had said, 'My first and earliest vow was to God—to aim always at His will, whatever might be between me and it. My next was to His Church—to lay aside the study of the world and of the flesh. It is these vows which bind my conscience to a pastoral simplicity of life among the people for whose souls I must give account to God; and could I depart from the conviction of my soul in these things, I then myself would be the first to say, A heart of broken vows could be no earthly shrine for you! But if you know of anything that love, "stronger than death," might do, or attempt to do, I charge you, tell me before you turn away!'

Antonia answered, 'Oh, daily, hourly, say, "Thy will be done!" Say it not in sorrowing resignation, but in living prayer! God's will is omnipotent. God's will is love. Pray that it may be done as in Heaven so in earth, and do nothing more; if the will of Heaven gives, it will give abundantly!' Then, for the first time, Antonia gave her hand, not as the pledge of union, but the seal of that farewell. One moment to his lips he pressed it, and the next he was alone—alone with the holy Heaven.

Weeks passed away, when one autumn morning the General called early at the Grange, and asked for Mrs. Barrington. Mrs. Barrington received him in her own sitting-room; he entered with a hurried step, but instead of words, his strength yielded, and he broke into weeping. Mrs. Barrington was perfectly overcome; but a few moments stemmed the torrent of his long pent-up feeling, and self-command reigned again. Then he said,—

'It is done! it is done! The rock of my hard heart is smitten, its last stronghold is taken; I have yielded to Heaven; the children are happy, and we are all thankful to God.'

Mrs. Barrington was deeply touched, as if 'the children' had been her own; so entirely had her spirit felt with, and honoured their high line of suffering obedience. The General told her with all his natural frankness, how, since his denial, his heart had been dead—not even the Divine word had been felt, nothing penetrated the shield of his pride and self-will; but that morning at family prayers, his son had

read, in order of course, the 28th chapter of Job. 'And,' said the General, 'it laid the whole open before me! Yes, I thought, if there be a young head crowned with wisdom upon earth, it is his, and I have been weighing against it all manner of this world's poor dross! No wonder he stood up above me as firm as a rock, and would make no compromise. I see it all now. Well, I rose from my knees, having made my confession, while they were offering up their morning adoration. I rose, but I stirred not a step from where I stood, there I called her to me, I folded her to my heart, and before them all, I said, "Forgive me, my child, it is granted! God's blessing on you both, and His mercy on me!" Well, as I held her to my heart, the first words she faintly said, were, "Papa will bless you for this. His last charge to me was, to keep the world under my feet!" I wrote off to the Alps before I sat down to breakfast, and he was with Antonia before you could believe the call had reached him! I came to make my confession, you see, and to beg you will look in upon us all as soon as you may be able.'

Jane's bright visit that autumn to the moated Grange, and how her presence lighted up its aspect of the olden time, her sweet friendship with Antonia, the spirit and the life she woke around, and all the love she won from all, even down to the noble St. Bernard dog, we cannot now narrate. The winter came, and she returned again to the metropolis.

'Uncle, I cannot take these kind and costly gifts with me. They would not suit my simple Rectory, nor me in it. Do not look grave; indeed my home will be all brightness

in its freedom, you shall see it will be; and the earnest in heart will care as much to come as if it were a costlier home, perhaps more, if all the truth were known. I know the day will come when you will say that your Antonia's home is best in its simplicity, that if you could, you would not change it! I want to tell you what I long to do with these rich gifts. I have written down the name of each kind giver. And now I want to ask you if you could take these splendid presents and get them changed for me into a clock for the tower of the Alpine church? It would make me so happy, if I could have a gift of general, cheerful use for all! And when I heard it strike, hour after hour, all my life long among the hills, it would remind me of the friends whose kindness made me able to put it there; and all the villagers would hear the sound and feel its constant benefit. My bridal gifts in that form could never be forgotten, and must always give fresh pleasure.'

The General was surprised and unwilling at first, but promised to undertake the transfer.

When the marriage day was fixed the General called Antonia aside, and said, 'Tell me, my child, what gift will you most value from your uncle and aunt? Ask, and you shall not be denied, if only it be worthy of our love. We have vainly tried to decide for you, seeing the world and the things of the world are under your feet!' Antonia then imparted a secret wish to her uncle.

The days rolled on and the eve of her bridal was come. The Hall was filled with guests. Jane was there, and Mrs.

Barrington, Laura also was there, and Miss Keymer. When the ladies left the drawing-room, Antonia drew Miss Keymer's arm in hers and accompanied by Leonore led her out into the garden, on towards the western sky where the sunset was glowing, until a short turn in the pathway led them down to a green nook, a little way back from the road. where the foundation for a house was then beginning; the workmen were gone, all was repose, and the birds warbled in the trees as if the building was one that was to be reared up with praise.

'Dear Miss Keymer,' said Antonia, 'could you be happy living here, so near to the home that you love, and looking up to my nest in the hills!'

Miss Keymer trembled, for there was no playfulness in Antonia's deep tone. Antonia saw the question was too much for her, and hastened to say, 'This home is indeed preparing for you! It is my uncle and aunt's gift to me, that we may have you always near us, and that you may have this sweet repose to refresh you after all your efforts for others. It is to be a lovely cottage, under these sheltering trees, with a garden around it. O, it makes me so happy to think of you here, with long bright hours of calm reading, and no claim but the sweet one of giving help and comfort to all that you love, rich and poor! Will you not be happy?' again said Antonia, as she fervently sealed her gift with a kiss.

'Blest indeed!' said Miss Keymer, and she raised her glance from Antonia to Heaven!

The marriage-day dawned in its brightness; it was the spring-tide of the year. Buds, blossoms, and birds, and the heart of two villages awoke to welcome the day. The service was to be performed at the church of the Alps; and many a young step surprised the dew-drops that morning, hastening thither with fresh-gathered flowers. Laura, Clara, and Leonore, followed by the little village-girls, were seen in the early morning ascending the Alpine hill, laden with their fragrant burden. They carpeted the chancel with bright flowers, hung them in festoons on the tombstones, and strewed them on the peasants' grassy graves, until the fragrant blossoming around told, not of death, but resurrection-life.

Antonia, that morning, breakfasted alone with her aunt, whose tears fell unbidden, and the orphan wept unrestrained in her maternal embrace.

Both villages, all of every age, were to meet on the festal occasion. Long tables were spread beneath the shade of the beech-trees for all the village guests invited. Eleven was the hour for the service at the church; and the pews, and the aisles, and churchyard, were filled with people assembling from all sides. An awning, supported on two poles, hung in front of the old church-tower. At length the procession was seen in the distance; it ascended the hill, then slackening its pace came almost to a stand; in a few moments the awning was dropped from the tower, and the peal of soft chimes struck at once on the ear. Then the carriages stood; it was Antonio's bridal clock! its chimes played for the first time, and then its musical bell struck the

hour of her bridal—the first hour it had told. The villagers had learned the history, they had gathered it one from another, and all was, in that moment, the deep silence of feeling, the reverence of love.

At the altar stood the bridegroom awaiting his bride, his friends beside him, and within the rails the bishop who years before had ordained him. Around the chancel stood the children of the Alpine school, where Antonia had, for long, taught with her cousins. The village mistress had devised a little plan of her own; as Antonia, supported on the arm of her uncle, entered the porch, the children sang out the first verse of their favourite hymn; and as the General trod the aisle with a step less firm than that with which he had pressed the sod of the battle-field, the words broke on his ear, "In Heaven we part no more!" The infant hymn was hushed in a moment, but it cost many, in the long procession, an effort to retain composure, and the veteran soldier for a moment struggled almost in vain; but he felt the trembling form that leaned on him, and was strong for her sake.

When the bride reappeared on the arm of her husband beneath the church-porch, the people received them, every head was uncovered; the marriage-bells pealed from the tower, and the long procession was soon lost in the distance; the people followed in bright groups, along the lanes and through the valleys, to the welcome awaiting them.

Thought can picture, without the narrative's aid, what the home of Antonia became. An English Rectory, so cul-

tivated in its power that it could adapt itself to all who passed its threshold; it could raise the peasant mind, charm the sturdy agriculturist into expansion of feeling, and in its free expression interest the most educated. Where the highest refinement was shown in the power of calling forth the best feelings of others, and where goodness made itself most felt by its enkindling warmth. Such was that English Rectory, and such many are; but not all. There are English Rectories at whose door stands no Angel of mercy, fenced round by no prayers of the poor, over whose roof lingers no sunbeam of blessing. O that the dwellers within them may awake, while yet the Bridegroom is distant, and trim their darkened lamps, and go forth; not alone, but having by seven-fold love "in a short time fulfilled the work of a long time!" let them win to the fold the infant of days and the old man, the strong in years and the sick on the bed of languishing, the lame, and the deaf, and the blind; let them so labour in the power of the constraining love of Christ that all these may be won, that when the chief Shepherd shall appear they may look around upon these as their glory and joy, and may receive "a crown that fadeth not away."

Who shall attempt to tell all that the pastor's home often is, and always might be! Opportunities, privileges, and responsibilities—bearing upon the personal destiny of others, meet in that calm centre with a power unequalled. When these are daily risen to and met in a strength divine, a light celestial, a love exhaustless and unwearied—because a love

whose source is infinite and eternal, who can estimate the bright results?

But the radiance rests not upon the pastor's home alone. Heavenly truth and love, with whatever elements of character, or position of circumstances combined, will be raised to an ascendancy over human hearts upon earth, and a kingdom in Heaven. "The Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night, for upon all the glory shall be a defence."

THE END.

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